COMIC DEMOCRACIES

FROM ANCIENT ATHENS TO THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

ANGUS FLETCHER

VISIT…

Comic Democracies

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Comic Democracies

From Ancient Athens to the American Republic

Angus Fletcher

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There's a savviness to the multitude.—Machiavelli

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Preface ix *Acknowledgments* xi

INTRODUCTION
Modern Democracies and Ancient *Demokratia* 1

1 : The Ancient History of Comedy and *Demokratia* 15

2 : Fortune Favors the Impetuous 34

3 : The *Virtù* of Imitation 53

4 : The Pursuit of Indolence 73

5 : Quixotic Governance 91

6 : Amending Ourselves 117

7 : *Demokratia* at Denshawai 136

CONCLUSION
The Futures of Comic Democracy 155

Notes 159 *Index* 203

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This book explores the social usefulness of comedy and democracy, treating them as tools for solving public problems such as hunger, poverty, and war.

It begins by reviving a tradition of comic theater that flourished in the open air of Athens and went on to shape the American Constitution, and it ends by sketching a simple way that this tradition might help us tackle the material hardships of today.

Two thousand—or even two hundred—years ago, this pragmatic approach to the old democrats and their plays would not have seemed especially remarkable. But we now live in an age when democracy is widely understood as more utopian than useful, while literature has increasingly come to be seen (even within our schools and universities) as useless. So, as a reminder of what was and perhaps again could be, I have pieced together a variety of empirical evidence that suggests that comedy and democracy can after all do what their ancient inventors maintained: build economic strength, bring collective joy, and in myriad other ways, improve our civic health and happiness.

Following the advice of earlier democrats, I have stuck to a straightforward style and backboned my claims with a historical narrative. Narrative (as the old poets sensed and newer scientists have come to agree) is one of the deep logics of our brains; so by presenting my case in story form, I have tried to ensure that what is helpful can more readily be grasped and what is worthless can more quickly be voided away.

Because of this narrative commitment, I have not attempted to be encyclopedic. Rather than aiming for the last word on ancient comedy's contributions to modern democracy, I have laid out the most vivid examples I could find, offering a roughly inclusive guide to building a better society without pretending to prescribe what that society must be.

And finally, in keeping with my pragmatic focus, I have not defined democracy as either a higher set of principles or a rational constitution of laws. Instead, I have treated it as a product of our bodily (indeed, biological) drive for the freedom to satisfy our individual needs and wants. Since this drive is a blind and greedy one, it can easily devolve into the parasitic dynamics of colonialism, class, and exploitation. But it has also, as I will show, been chan-

neled for thousands of years by comedy into a source of active curiosity, mutual exchange, and minority protections.

Because this, more than anything, is democracy. Not the rule of the majority but the conservation of minorities, with "minority" being understood in the present as a disempowered population, yet with an eye to a future in which political inequalities start to dissolve and we can recognize that each of us individually is a minority, our own perspective unique and in the public interest to nurture and involve.

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Comic Democracies

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Modern Democracies and Ancient *Demokratia*

THERE IS AN OLD STORY that democracy begat comedy, and comedy in turn democracy. It was, the story runs, in the free atmosphere of Greek *demokratia* that comedy first took root, delighting audiences with its uncensored speech and quite literally becoming an institution, funded by the state. The comic playwrights, meanwhile, eagerly repaid the debt. Satirizing would-be despots and coaxing the common man to laugh away his self-importance and embrace reform, they helped steer the public between the Scylla and Charybdis of tyranny and anarchy. And so it was that long after these playwrights (and their golden age of freedom) faded into history, their spirit carried on. From Rome's *Res Publica* to America's New World republic, generations of schoolteachers used ancient comedy to promote an ethos of creative independence in their pupils, many of whom went on to initiate populist reforms and even wholesale revolutions. Machiavelli, Milton, Montesquieu, Jefferson—these were just a few of the rebel souls whose youthful education in comedy nurtured the love of liberty, the confidence in ordinary folk, and the rhetorical inventiveness to overthrow princes and revive the lost opportunities of Athens.

Like any familiar yarn, this one possesses its nostalgic charms. But it is more than just a good tale about our democratic past. It is also a possible guide to our democratic future. Democracy is in vogue today like never before—where the Founding Fathers once fretted over its implications of lusty disorder, the word now falls easily from the lips of theocrats and strongmen—yet the recent failure to export popular rule to countries such as Iraq reveals that its cultivation still remains a mystery. Because democracy depends upon qualities such as autonomy and diversity that, by their very nature, seem to defy institutional reproduction, efforts to instill it through schools or legal

constitutions have inevitably appeared suspect, if not oxymoronic. Many of its recent proponents have therefore looked past law and education toward the less centralized and more grassroots processes of culture, but this shift in focus only highlights the other side of the riddle. Culture is such a dispersed and various thing, its mechanisms of action so subtle and elusive, that it is hard to see how it could be shaped and marshaled, and even if it could be, would this not compromise the self-determining variety that makes it democratic?

Given our current uncertainty over how to grow democracy, the old story of comedy seems deserving of a second telling. If the ancients were right, then comedy could perhaps help us negotiate the paradox of instituting self-rule, providing a scripted source of self-determination that supports the potential of other cultural forms to do the same. Yet although the ancients' tale is plausible enough to have survived more or less unchallenged for two millennia, recent critics have had their doubts. Most obviously, there is the disturbing fact that ancient comedy is strewn with crude stereotypes of foreigners, women, and the rest of the politically dispossessed. But beyond this potentially amendable matter of content, there is the deeper problem that ancient comedy's very form—nakedly shaped as it is by an obsequious desire to please—seems less characteristic of democracy than of its arch-usurper, demagoguery. Insinuating itself into the heart of the mob, the old comedies played on the public's anxieties about change, scoffing at new ideas as irreligious, innovation as insane, and female leaders as a sign of chaos come again. As one of Aristophanes's characters sneers at a student he has burnt alive: "That's what you get for questioning."[1] In hindsight, that is, there seems reason to believe that the ancients were only half-right. Comedy may have sprung from democracy, but the spirit of open-mindedness appears not to have been hereditary. Instead, the comic playwrights behaved like princely brats, taking advantage of their liberty to attack minorities and wax reactionary.

In response to this skeptical counternarrative, a number of scholars have tried to rehabilitate the old plays by pointing out the many instances in which they celebrate free speech, promote equality, and in other ways champion democratic ideals. Yet even the staunchest defenders of comedy have been forced to concede that there is no way to erase the time that *Lysistrata* laughs at giving women a permanent vote or *Frogs* complains that old bloodlines are no longer respected or *Birds* traces the breakdown of civic decency to foreigners who have wheedled their way into citizenship. Such moments so flatly violate modern expectations of democracy that, whatever ancient comedy's other virtues, it seems too erratic in its principles to be of more than historical

interest. Lurking beneath this concession, moreover, is a far grimmer concern. Tyrants frequently gained power in antiquity by publicly declaring their love for the people, and given comedy's own demagogic associations, its loud support for popular freedom could easily be a similar ploy. If so, then the evidence gathered by comedy's recent advocates would in fact be the sugar shell that poisoned ancient democracy, giving us all the more reason not to swallow it today.

In this book, I will therefore attempt to salvage ancient comedy's populist credentials in a different way. Instead of claiming that comedy was a nascent (and therefore somewhat raw and inconsistent) promoter of democratic principles, I will accept the charge leveled by its modern critics: there was nothing especially principled about it. Yet rather than conceding that there was thus also nothing especially democratic about the ancient plays, I will suggest that it is still possible for the old story about comedy to be (mostly) correct. This is because, as new scholarship in political science has shown, ancient *demokratia* and modern democracy hinge upon different logics, each of which has made its own historical contribution to the development of popular rule. Where the latter has actively promoted human rights and freedoms, the former reactively found ways to alleviate hunger, poverty, and other sources of public misery. Modern democracy, in effect, is more principled, while ancient *demokratia* was more pragmatic, and although this divergence between the logics of old and new is substantial enough to have led to the modern wariness of ancient comedy, it does not make the two irreconcilable. Because both styles of democracy value pluralism (one because it is right, the other because it is useful), both treat differences of perspective as an opportunity for mutual enrichment. And so just as the ancient comics could have learned from the committed egalitarianism of the present, there are, I will propose, two ways in which we might benefit from the old pragmatism today. Most basically, we can borrow some of the practical techniques that our ancestors developed to kick-start populism in an age of hostile oligarchs and kings. And more broadly, we can discover a strategy for addressing the largest shortcoming of democracy promotion in our own time: its universalizing approach. This approach has increasingly been critiqued as both undemocratic and ineffective—alienating other cultures, running quickly dry of ideas, twisting freedom into a justification for imperialism—and because the ancient comedies found ways to grow popular rule without committing to a single utopian ideal, I will suggest that they offer a model for promoting democracy that can be more individually attentive—and therefore, both more successful and more free.

With an eye to these modern applications, the following chapters will exhume the old tools of comic *demokratia*. As preparation for the dig, the remainder of this introduction will expand on the brief sketch above, explaining in more detail (1) the struggles of recent efforts to promote democracy, (2) the ensuing search for a practical solution, and (3) the reasons for believing that ancient comedy might contribute to this solution in a substantive way.

The Struggles of Recent Efforts to Promote Democracy

For the past thirty years, global efforts to promote democracy have relied on a strategic model hatched during the Cold War.[2] Known in its earliest incarnation as the "electoral model," it anchored democracy in voting rights, urging free elections across the Third World.[3] When it became clear, however, that ballots alone did not transform countries into operational democracies, this original strategy was expanded into the "liberal-electoral model," which maintained that elections could only work if they were supported by a deeper popular commitment to constitutional government and human rights. Instead of simply encouraging the rest of the world to vote, democracy promoters therefore began distributing Western media, pumping up foreign economies with free-market merchandise, and even resorting at times to boots on the ground, all in an effort to establish a global democratic culture.[4]

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the surge of Third Wave democracy in Asia, Africa, South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, this liberal-electoral strategy seemed to be working so well that it famously led Francis Fukuyama to proclaim "The End of History."[5] The political struggles of the past were over, and civilization had reached its zenith: Western-style democracy. Up until about 2006, when civil war broke out in Iraq, this euphoric assessment was repeated confidently by a host of analysts who celebrated free-market liberal democracy as our common human destiny.[6] Yet over the past decade, Fukuyaman optimism has been in rapid decline, eroded not just by events in Iraq but by three broader global trends. First, there has been a wave of buyer's remorse in the new democracies of the former Soviet Union and the Third World. The citizens of these countries were promised the highest goods of free-market liberalism—wealth and freedom—and yet they have not only seen their economies dip but found their cultural autonomy threatened by a flood of Western brands. Second, there has been a growing list of self-proclaimed democracies that have failed to hew to their own principles. The leaders of Iran, Russia, Ukraine, Thailand, Ecuador, and

Kyrgyzstan have been accused of electoral fraud, while popularly elected governments in places such as Hungary and Bangladesh have slid into undisguised demagoguery or worse.[7] Third, there has been an open rejection of democracy by autocratic factions in Egypt and Syria, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, Eritrea and Venezuela—the list goes on—as wealthy oligarchs, reactionary clerics, and military factions have begun to grab back the levers of power.[8] And so it is that many of the most ardent followers of Fukuyama have now come to speak of a "backlash" against democracy, a "Rollback" of freedom, and even the "Democracy recession."[9]

A New Method for Promoting Democracy

In response to these setbacks, supporters of the liberal-electoral model have proposed various tweaks and adjustments, but a number of political scientists have come to feel that more profound changes are needed.[10] The problem with the liberal-electoral model, they have suggested, is that it originates in a narrow (and by no means uncontested) tradition of Enlightenment philosophy that has been used to champion free-market capitalism, Western culture, and other idiosyncratic features of Cold War democracy as timeless ideals.[11] Paradoxically, that is, the liberal-electoral model's vision of universal democracy reflects a tiny slice of human experience, and so it is hardly surprising that the effort to apply it everywhere has been at best ineffective and at worst imperial.[12]

In place of the liberal-electoral model, its critics (whom I will refer to loosely as the "new democrats") have therefore called for a more flexible approach that reaches out to alternative forms of liberalism and, indeed, beyond liberalism entirely.[13] For as the new democrats have noted, the "liberal" in the liberal-electoral model has abetted—or at least, not managed to check—a universalizing approach to democracy.[14] Liberalism's own propensity to think in terms of the overarching stretches back to its founding authors. From early moderns such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant, to moderns such as Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls, liberals have tended to be Enlightenment thinkers who share the conviction that (as Berlin articulates it): "politics . . . [is a] form of philosophical inquiry."[15] While liberalism is far more diverse than its liberal-electoral offshoot would suggest, it is thus rooted in the same historical effort to ground government in universal principles, and since many liberals have been prosperous Western males, its search for these principles has been shaped by similar economic and social trends.[16] To expand democracy promotion

beyond the cultural perspectives of the Enlightenment, the free market, and the West, the new democrats have therefore looked to postliberal, preliberal, paraliberal, and even illiberal political models such as radical democracy, popular pluralism, progressive pragmatism, Machiavellian populism, and postcolonialism.[17] In the process, they have begun to explore alternatives to three of the liberal-electoral model's core methodological commitments, exchanging its universalism for pluralism, its utopianism for pragmatism, and its philosophical idealism for a cautious empiricism.

Pluralism. Where the liberal-electoral model envisions one ideal form of democracy, the new democrats see a "huge library" of possibilities.[18] They have already stocked a few shelves with alternatives like socialist democracy, deliberative democracy, and republican democracy.[19] But the vast rooms of the library have been built to support an even more fine-grained approach: a collection of all the "knowledge and experience" that has enabled individual democratic communities to thrive in their particular niches.[20] What makes the new democrats pluralists is thus not just an expanded set of theoretical models (as useful as this loose classification scheme may be). It is the rejection of universal democracy in favor of the view that popular rule reflects both the local perspectives of its citizens and the site-specific contours of their situation. Rather than using the historical record to distill a general set of rules for establishing utopia, the new democrats therefore treat it as a catalogue of particulars, for it is in the nitty-gritty that the individual is preserved.[21]

Pragmatism. The new democrats' wariness of idealism has also prompted a turn toward pragmatism, not in the thin sense of what works, but in the more profound sense of a problem-based method.[22] Instead of attempting to lead democracy toward utopia, the new democrats have focused on extricating the dispossessed from hunger, unemployment, disease, pollution, war, and other material ills.[23] And instead of adopting a fixed strategy for doing so, they have been more experimentally inclined, freely adapting strategies that have worked in similar circumstances in the past.[24] This problem-solving approach benefits directly from pluralism, because the richer the reference works in our democratic library, the more likely we are to find an adaptable solution.[25] The relationship with pluralism, moreover, is a reciprocal one, for since a problem-based method kicks into action when democracy is judged to have broken down, it operates not from a fixed definition of what democracy must be but from a looser sense of what it is not. Rather than pointing out a single path ahead, it contents itself with a set of boundaries that de-

mocracies cannot stray beyond, affording a broad range of what constitutes self-rule.

Empiricism. Finally, working in concert with these other two practices is a cautiously empirical approach.[26] In support of pluralism, empiricism provides a method for recognizing the distinctive details of other cultural forms of self-rule. And in support of pragmatism, it offers a way to gauge the effectiveness of individual problem-solving attempts: When we apply a democratic remedy, do we see a decrease in hunger, infant mortality, and other measurable symptoms of popular suffering?[27] Moreover, just as empiricism can reinforce these other two commitments, so too can they strengthen its democratic function. From a democratic perspective, the danger of an empirical method is that it can be misconstrued as a stairway to truth. Although historians of science have shown that empiricism involves a materially constrained (and often messy) process of "falsification" that cannot prove things to be true (but only increase the probability that they are not untrue),[28] the old up-to-Enlightenment view of induction lingers on as a popular myth that promotes incuriousness by implying that certain scientifically equipped (and so typically wealthy and/or Western) populations have an authoritative grip on reality. Against this antidemocratic twisting of induction, the empiricism of the new democrats more modestly presents itself as a helpful method for finding answers that seem to work, within a given set of constraints, for the various parties involved. In keeping with its ethic of pragmatic pluralism, that is, this empirical method acknowledges that data can never be gathered without bias, but nevertheless urges us to listen, as hard and as deeply as we can, to voices outside our own.[29] Not because such listening guarantees that we will perfectly understand, but because it improves our odds of learning something that might help us problem solve.

A Role for Ancient Comedy in Growing Democracy Today

On the endlessly growing library shelves envisioned by the new democrats, there is of course a quiet nook somewhere for ancient comedy. But as I will suggest over the next few pages, the old comedies can do more than take their place inside the library. They can actively support its continuing construction. Because the new democrats did not break ground until the later twentieth century, their library is mostly stocked with two kinds of works: case studies on fledging democratic states and theoretical blueprints for future

change.[30] While the library contains a rich catalogue of what is now working and what might someday work better, it thus lacks examples of how a pluralist, problem-based, and empirical approach to democracy promotion has succeeded over the long haul. And without such examples, it is missing what, on its own inductive logic, qualifies as its deepest bedrock of support.

Ancient comedy's preliberal origins and long record of historical influence can allow it to serve as one such foundational example. The roots of ancient comedy go back well before Enlightenment philosophy, indeed, all the way back to a time when democracy (as Plato famously grumbled) was not philosophical at all.[31] Although the ancient democrats were deeply invested in freedom, they viewed it less as a higher ideal than as an ingredient of material satisfaction. To be free was to have the opportunity to indulge in one's own bodily inclinations without constraint from others, and so where modern liberals have called on their fellow citizens to "martyr" themselves for liberty,[32] the ancient proponents of *demokratia* eschewed such otherworldly appeals. From their this-worldly vantage, dying for freedom was as illogical as trading one's mouth for a meal, for it achieved happiness at the expense of the thing needed to appreciate it. In fact, so fleshly was the focus of the ancient democrats that though antiquity produced numerous theoretical defenses of monarchy and oligarchy, there are no surviving attempts to rationalize *demokratia* as a better form of government.[33] As the ancients saw it, if democracy promoted freedom, and if freedom led to happiness, then no citizen was going to demand a justification for the government that had set him free. And conversely, if democracy didn't make its citizens happy, then no amount of theorizing was going to convince them otherwise. Rather than thinking too hard about it, the ancient democrats thus got on with the business of exercising their autonomy, confident that, in the end, its worth would prove self-evident.

The unconsidered nature of *demokratia* would seem to prevent it from serving as a model for any intentional undertaking, let alone one as fraught with complexities as modern democracy. Yet despite the ancients' disinterest in philosophizing, their commitment to the public's bodily happiness lent their political activities a rough methodological consistency that—as later, more reflective, scholars have shown—is marked by three core practices: empiricism, problem-based pragmatism, and pluralism. The same three practices, that is, that the new democrats have suggested that we incorporate more deeply into modern democracy.

Empiricism. The empiricism of *demokratia,* as Machiavelli noted centuries

later, was a natural outgrowth of its emphasis on public happiness.[34] Instead of polling an oligarchic few about what they thought was rational, *demokratia* asked the general public to vote on whether a particular policy was pleasing them, linking their individual bodies into a collective nervous system for gauging the material well-being of the body politic. When the people were hungry, war weary, or otherwise in pain, they voted for change; when they felt generally satisfied, they voted for more of the same. Their ballots thus served as a statewide diagnostic apparatus for identifying civic ills and gauging the effectiveness of attempted cures, and so though the policy choices of the hoi polloi may not have been guided by deep principles or philosophical commitments, their consciousness of their own happiness or grief allowed them to trial-and-error their way toward solutions. This inductive method was hardly flawless—even when it was joined to a long historical memory, a rich and inclusive source of fresh perspectives, and a flexible and open-minded decision-making process, it was rife with stumbles and compromises. However, while the messy and uncertain process of *demokratia* was by no means ideal, it was empirically valid, sharing the same feedback-driven logic that has since been identified by cognitive psychologists and cultural anthropologists as a biological basis for human learning.[35]

Pragmatism. Ancient *demokratia* was also fundamentally pragmatic in the sense of being problem based. What sent the civil courts, the general assemblies, and the other voting bodies of ancient Athens lurching into action were physical disruptions to the state's everyday business. These disruptions could be as minor as a dispute between merchants or as major as a wartime famine, but either way, the basic mechanism of *demokratia* was the same. The voting population did not gather together to enforce a timeless set of democratic rights but to patch together a practical response. This blindly reactive method was a constant source of fodder for Plato and the other critics of *demokratia*: Who was leading it? Where was it going? What could it hope to achieve without an underlying plan? Yet despite these rational concerns, Athenian *demokratia* was highly successful.[36] For nearly two centuries, it dealt effectively with hunger, war, and other crises large and small, and as recent political scientists such as David Runciman and Josiah Ober have argued, this practical success was no accident.[37] After all, while Plato may have believed that the world was structured by certain eternal laws, the rather more dour view of our scientific present is that the struggle for life has launched a Darwinian arms race where everything is doomed sooner or later to obsolescence. In the resulting soup of instability, the benefits for looking ahead decrease sharply over time, and

while this does not mean that there is *never* any advantage to planning for tomorrow (when pockets of stability emerge, there certainly can be), it does mean that risk-reward is tilted toward the short term.[38] Somewhat counterintuitively, then, we are in general more likely to enjoy the future if we privilege the here and now,[39] and by and large, this is how ancient democracy operated: "in *demokratia* . . . men live from day to day."[40] The particular version of nearsightedness adopted by the old democrats was, moreover, an eminently practical one. Because *demokratia* was rooted in a sensitivity to problems, it was set up to recognize the troubles created by its own policy decisions and promptly react to them. This is what led the ancient Athenians to so often contradict themselves, charging one way out of the gate before abruptly reversing course. And while such flip-flopping could seem ridiculous, it also meant that *demokratia* tended to be moderate, never wedded for long to any one partisan agenda and never damning itself in this world for a presumed salvation in the next.

Pluralism. Finally, the hedonistic, problem-based approach of *demokratia* gave it a pluralist bent. This pluralism was by no means consistent. Had it been, ancient Athens would not have seethed with misogyny, xenophobia, and all its other toxic prejudices. Yet even though the old democrats were not actively inclusive, they were reactively so. Since *demokratia* sought to change course when it ran into problems, and since problems were a constant of its existence, it was continually looking outside its current policy for alternatives. Most of the time, it sought these alternatives in the narrow slice of the population that met the criteria for Athenian citizenship, but when the state was placed under extreme duress, it showed itself willing to expand the voting rolls to include foreigners, exiles, and even slaves. This reactive egalitarianism is what opened the door for the "half-alien" Themistocles to make his famous case in 480 BCE for supplanting the knightly hoplite with the humble naval rower,[41] a policy shift that in turn prompted other dramatic expansions of the franchise (as when the *demokratia* extended citizenship in 406 BCE to every slave and foreigner who had pulled an oar for Athens in the fleet). Such outside voices helped democratic Athens—in the face of constant aggression from kings and oligarchs—survive for nearly two hundred years, and had the city-state been more proactive in seeking their opinions, it might well have lived a few years more.[42]

Although ancient *demokratia* long predates the scholarly methods of the new democrats, it thus offers a historical example of the success that an empirical, pragmatic, pluralist approach to popular rule can have. Moreover,

of all the methods used to promote *demokratia* in ancient Athens, none was more empirical, pragmatic, or pluralist than comedy. Comedy has always succeeded by pleasing its audience, and in the case of ancient comedy, this empiricist dynamic was nakedly explicit. Performed at festivals where spectators voted for their favorite play, Athenian theater operated as a crude laboratory for quantifying public happiness. Coupled to this inductive hedonism, moreover, was the same reactive pragmatism that characterized *demokratia* in general. Ancient comedies began not with a flight of cheerful escapism but with a somber reminder of a contemporary crisis—the civic corruption that propels the angry citizens of *Birds,* the exhaustion with war that provokes the women of *Lysistrata,* the critical military situation that launches Dionysus hellward in *Frogs*—that made the resulting plot a long-form exercise in problem solving. And finally, this problem-solving approach steered comedy toward pluralism. Comic playwrights were willing to explore the most taboo subjects to make their audience smile, and their characters were similarly open to just about anything—soliciting advice from birds, dead poets, and even (when all else failed) their wives—if it seemed like it might work. No less than the current critics of the liberal-electoral model, the old comics were thus led by their focus on the public's material happiness to prefer pragmatism to universalism. Shrugging off the philosopher-king's belief in one right way ahead, they tackled civic problems in a roughly inclusive and empirical way.

The shared pragmatism of the old comics and the new democrats opens up the possibility that Athenian comedy might have something to contribute to modern populism that has gone unnoticed by recent scholars. When defending the democratic value of the ancient plays to present-day audiences, these scholars have naturally tended to emphasize the aspects of comedy that seem most reminiscent of modern democracy's more philosophical take on self-rule.[43] They have, for example, stressed its freedoms of speech, its invitations to critical inquiry, its articulations of democratic principles, and its intellectual spirit of irony, irreverence, and free play.[44] Meanwhile, they have not extracted much democratic value from comedy's grosser formal features: its eccentric and overreaching heroes, its illogical brew of bleakness and mad optimism, its wallowing trough of sex and shit and song, and its general enthusiasm for all the mundane particulars that (as the ancient encyclopedists observed) made it a puddle reflection of ordinary life.[45] Yet while these weird, trivial, and frequently grubby details exist in little obvious relation to the higher principles of modern democracy, they can readily be justified as exercises in *demokratia*. Comedy's jumbled tone, its pleasure-hungry characters,

its experimental form, its ludicrous gods—all of these embody the worldly search for popular satisfaction that drove the ancient democrats. Moreover, as befits a practically minded approach, these dramatic techniques enjoyed a great deal of earthly success. Long after Athenian *demokratia* had itself collapsed, they endured, kept alive by the playwrights of Rome, the theaters of the Renaissance, and finally, the impromptu stages of America's early republic.

Because the old comedies so often delighted in small-minded abuse, this extensive record of promoting public happiness cannot justify their resurrection intact. But it does suggest that these comedies might contribute to modern democracy in two other ways. First, they could serve as a two-thousand-year case study on the effectiveness of the new democrats' alternative to utopia, giving us a detailed look at the general benefits (and pitfalls) of taking a problem-solving, inductive, and inclusive approach to democracy. Second, they could help implement this democratic alternative, providing us with a catalogue of populism-promoting strategies that have been tested and refined through centuries of use. What worked in bygone days to expand the franchise perhaps might work again and, indeed, might work even better now. After all, if pluralism is a major part of what made *demokratia* successful, then how much more might the old comic forms succeed if we swapped their tired prejudices for active inclusiveness, consistently supporting minority perspectives instead of insulting them to get a quick laugh from the mob?

To explore these two possible contributions further, I will use the following chapters to recover a collection of the ancients' more successful comic tools. Because of the novelty of this enterprise, my method has necessarily been somewhat exploratory, but I have found a strong and reliable guide in three of the techniques that Ober and other recent political scientists have devised to study ancient *demokratia*. First, I have framed the emergence of comedy as a response to famine, war, and other public problems. That is, rather than interpreting the old plays as attempts to lead people toward a more ideal happiness, I have treated them as efforts to relieve physical miseries that can be traced in the historical record. Second, I have tracked the development of comic forms from one generation to the next, as they were gradually refined (or rejected) to make comedy more effective at addressing public suffering. That is, rather than defining comedy as a set of fixed generic conventions that were defined in opposition to other literary forms, I have approached it as a series of experiments that were shaped over its two-thousand-year history by a mix of individual innovation and popular feedback. And third, I have traced the role of comic forms in encouraging tolerance, collaboration,

curiosity, and other democratic behaviors. That is, rather than looking at how comedy enshrined civic ideals, I have focused on how it shifted public practice. In sum, following the footsteps of recent work on *demokratia,* I have treated comedy as pragmatic in its origins, its methods, and its results. Or, to put it in more literary terms, I have approached comedy's democratic function as a dramatic narrative, unfolding through fits and starts and multiple perspectives toward a happier (though never perfect) ending.

This pragmatic approach to exploring comedy's role in democracy will carry us from the early experiments of Athenian comic playwrights through to the Renaissance revival of *demokratia* that culminated in early American democracy. Many of the ancient and early modern authors of comedy we will encounter on this historical expedition had little (or no) ideological interest in protecting minorities or deepening the ballot box. As we will see, however, their investment in public happiness led them to accumulate an eclectic variety of comic practices for encouraging flexible, cooperative, and inclusive societies. These practices thus provided an effective (if unintentional) resource for cultivating *demokratia,* and as a crudely empirical way of measuring their material success, I will trace some of the fingerprints they left on the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and other landmark events in the development of early modern democracy. The first of the five practices I will exhume is the comic slave trick of *impetuoso,* recovered from ancient comedy by Machiavelli in *La Mandragola* and used by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* to propel America's Second Continental Congress into declaring independence. The second is *imitatio,* which was copied from the ancients by Shakespeare in the comic portions of his second *Henriad,* from where it found its way into George Washington's public refusal to be king. The third is *indolentia,* which was adopted from Epicurus's materialist ethics by the New Comics and finally incorporated by Jefferson into the preamble of the Declaration. The fourth is Quixotic governance, which was derived from ancient comedy by Miguel de Cervantes, Henry Fielding, and other early modern novelists, and which served as a narrative model for America's first federal historians. And the fifth is comic self-revision, which dates back to Homer's *Iliad* and was eventually appropriated by Washington Irving and Frederick Douglass as a justification for the Thirteenth Amendment.

This historical survey, I will suggest in closing, reveals that comic *demokratia* became more inclusive over time, gradually addressing the major practical inconsistency that had plagued it since the days of Athens. Even without the tug of modern idealism, ancient and early modern comic authors and audi-

ences slowly abandoned minority bashing for less narrow-minded forms of humor, helping to substantiate the new democrats' claim that a problem-solving method tends over time toward pluralism. Yet although the following pages will track the growing inclusiveness of comic *demokratia,* I do not want to imply that it was, from a modern standpoint, ever acceptable or sufficient. The old comedies were written primarily by men, and although quite a few of these males were social outcasts (including two born as slaves), they were nearly all what we would now consider white (a label that, to be sure, would have riled the ancient Athenians—who saw whites as barbarians from the savage fringes—but that nevertheless fairly reflects the dominant ethnic place they once enjoyed). Since comedy's lack of diversity is part of the historical record, it cannot be eliminated from any study of its past, but I will offer two empirical reasons for not continuing its biases into the future. First, I will show just how effective the techniques of comic *demokratia* could be in those rare instances when they were seized upon by a social minority, as Mercy Otis Warren did when she wrote her comic history of the American Revolution or as Frederick Douglass did when he parodied liberal whites. Second, I will conclude with a sixth set of case studies that connect comic *demokratia* to the more rigorous inclusiveness of modern democracy by exploring a pair of postcolonial plays (one in Anglo Irish, one in Egyptian Arabic) that mobilize the ancient techniques of comedy in response to the political concerns of the present day. Such works, I will suggest, open our eyes to what comic democracy could be, guiding us toward a tomorrow in which diversity is appreciated not as a grudging byproduct of popular hedonism but as the deep source of our common good.

To get us started on this practical recovery of the past, chapter 1 will outline the early beginnings of the partnership between comic and democratic pragmatism, describing an Old Comic trilogy that encouraged the pluralism of *demokratia* as a way to rescue ancient Athens from that most terrible of physical hardships: war.

The Ancient History of Comedy and *Demokratia*

The Megarians claim to have invented comedy
in the days of their *demokratia.*[1]—Aristotle, *Poetics*

And so it was that, from the beginning, comedy and *demokratia* were linked. Both were populist, free speaking, and filled with plots to save the demos,[2] and the ancient scholiasts opined that it was surely no coincidence that Old Comedy had withered when the Thirty Tyrants overthrew Athenian democracy. As more recent scholars have observed, however, the relationship between comedy and *demokratia* could not have been this tidy.[3] To begin with, the disappearance of Old Comedy cannot be blamed wholly on the Thirty. The tyrants were deposed after barely a year, and it was during the subsequent period of democracy that Old Comedy actually faded. Then there are the bacchanalian origins of Athenian theater. Comedy began as a source of wild amusement, and if it often delighted its audience by poking fun at the rich and oligarchic, it was also quite happy to mock the corruptions and inefficiencies of popular rule. Finally, there is the issue of Aristophanes.[4] The most famous author of Old Comedy, he was no blind populist; in fact, his works evince enough suspicion of public sentiment that he could be hailed in Victorian Britain as "a man of rank" who "dared . . . correct the profligacy" of the "multitude."[5] Because of these complicating factors, modern scholars have disagreed over the political leanings of ancient comedy, and indeed they have often doubted whether it leaned at all.[6] While there are clearly populist elements to Old Comedy,[7] it is thus equally plain that the plays do not consistently support minority rights, civil liberties, universal equality, or anything else that we might now consider a coherent democratic platform.

In what follows, I will therefore offer a fresh take on the puzzle of Old Comedy's political allegiances by taking up the suggestion, made recently by the historians of democracy touched upon in the introduction, that the foundation of Athenian *demokratia* was not a thoroughgoing ideology. Instead, it

was a messy and reactive collection of practices that expanded popular authority in response to civic emergency. Seen from this pragmatic perspective, Old Comedy's failure to advocate constantly for the disempowered is not fatal to its democratic credentials. After all, if *demokratia* was driven by crisis, then it would hardly be surprising if in times of relative prosperity, comedy (like other Athenian institutions) happily reinforced the status quo, lapsed into conservative nostalgia, and even bashed minorities. Rather, what matters is how Old Comedy functioned in moments when the state was in imminent danger, moments, that is, when the private well-being of the majority of its citizens became obviously dependent upon a shared public concern. In such moments, did Old Comedy suggest that the way out of this danger was to empower a virtuous few to marshal the people to safety? Or did it instead work to enlarge the franchise, reaching out to underrepresented groups and including them in the decision-making process? Did it blame women, the poor, the foreign, and the rest of the politically marginalized for Athens's state of emergency? Or did it treat these marginalized populations as a valuable civic resource, a way to inject energy and ideas into a government that had run out of its own? The most direct way to answer these questions is to narrow our focus to Old Comedies written at times when Athens was profoundly at risk, and I will suggest over the following pages that when we turn to this subset of ancient comedy, we find that it not only pushed to enlarge the franchise but justified the push by identifying pluralism as a resource for solving civic problems. From here, I will then trace how later Greek and Roman New Comedies picked up this pluralist model of problem solving, so that long after Athenian *demokratia* had faded from the world's stage, its comic contribution to popular rule played on.

While there is no ancient theory of *demokratia,* antiquity has bequeathed us one near-theory: book 8 of Plato's *Republic*.[8] Plato disliked the notion of popular government, but he thought about it deeply, and amid his sardonic critiques, he identified three of its key features.[9] First, he observed, *demokratia* began not with a clear goal but with a popular crisis: the poor (οἱ πένητες) were suffering.[10] Democracy was thus not an attempt to achieve a clearly articulated end. It was a spasm of discontent in the bodies of the masses, and this fleshly origin led to what Plato saw as the second feature of *demokratia*: its crass materiality. Instead of seeking a virtuous ideal, its citizens were concerned with relieving their ache for food and sex and other such bodily things.[11] Third, Plato noted, the fact that *demokratia* was rooted in the appetites of the multitude meant that it too was multitudinous (ποικίλον).[12] Like

a gaudy "bazaar" (παντοπώλιον), it was filled with variety, as each citizen was steered by his particular physical constitution toward his own "Constitution of laws."[13]

Plato intended this account of democracy as an insult, and it can seem a nasty one. Conspicuously missing from his theory is a serious consideration of the positive virtues—in particular, freedom of speech (*parrhesia*) and legal equality (*isonomia*)—that the ancient democrats treasured about their government.[14] Instead, *demokratia* is equated with an unholy trinity of reactiveness, materialism, and diversity that leads Plato to shake his head in exasperation: "democratic man . . . lives from day to day, indulging the lust of the hour; sometimes he gets drunk to music, then tries to get fit on water; then he has a go at sports, then philosophy, then politics, jumping up to say what pops into his head."[15] For two thousand years, the educated followed Plato in taking this dim view of the headless pragmatism of Attic democracy.[16] Indeed, the philosopher's contempt became so ingrained that even democratically inclined thinkers did their best to separate themselves from the Athenians' experiment in self-rule. The American Founding Fathers preferred the example of the gentleman senators of Rome, and Jefferson himself remarked to one of the supporters of the French Revolution: "Like Solon to the Athenians, you have given [the people] not the best possible government, but the best they can bear."[17]

The fact that Plato succeeded in smearing *demokratia* does not, however, mean that modern democrats should reject his theory out of hand. For though Plato has little interest in recognizing freedom of speech, legal equality, or any other higher principle as the guiding light of Athenian democracy, the evidence of history is that its citizens were not strictly guided by such principles either.[18] Famously, *parrhesia* and *isonomia* were extended to less than 20 percent of the physical population.[19] Slaves and women were not granted the right to voice their beliefs in public, nor were the poor offered the same access to political office or afforded the oratorical training necessary to participate equally in the law courts and assemblies. Moreover, even within the class of individuals that qualified as full citizens, democratic principles had rather more worldly associations than they now enjoy. Because the Greeks saw freedom less as a set of positive rights than as the absence of negative restraints, the Athenians came to regard imperialism as a key ingredient of their independence.[20] It was, after all, the material wealth of empire that enabled the Athenians (or at least certain Athenians) to more "freely" enjoy the bodily things they wanted, establishing a link between liberty and dominion

that was summed up on stage by Power himself: "No one is really free—except Zeus."[21] Although the ancient democrats saw freedom as the highest of goods, they were thus not above treating it in the most pragmatic of fashions. Using it to satisfy their physical wants, they measured its purity in earthly effects.

Even the noblest democratic principle—free speech—was not viewed as the inalienable right it is today.[22] Unlike in modern democracies, where the state is expected to privilege individual freedom of speech over larger national concerns, the ancient Athenians subordinated it to the public good.[23] Citizens did not have total liberty to express themselves but could be shouted down, harshly punished, and even executed for speaking in ways that were deemed socially inappropriate.[24] Free speech was thus only permitted insofar as it seemed to contribute to the well-being of *demokratia,*[25] and far from being embarrassed by this intimate relationship between their noble principles and their national self-interest, the ancient democrats extolled it. Herodotus declared that it was freedom that had inspired the Athenians "to work hard for success," while one of the founding mothers of Athens enthused to theater crowds that there was no more felicitous combination than "free speech and prosperity."[26]

To acknowledge all this is not to say that democratic principles carried no political weight in Athens. In even the most pragmatic governments (as we will explore in chapter 7), principles can still have a great deal of rhetorical force. But it is to say that free speech and equality were not the polestars leading *demokratia* ahead. They were tied to—and ultimately subordinated to—the deeper material drives of Athenian society. What prompted democracy in the first place was that large numbers of poorer males determined that it was in their own self-interest to force their way into government, and what kept it going was that the decisions it made were correlated with the empire's commercial success.[27] At no point did the enfranchised one-sixth display an active interest in extending their newly acquired political authority to other disempowered populations—they did so only when pressed to by crisis. And so if we dig to the deepest level of Athenian *demokratia* and unearth what made it distinctive from neighboring oligarchies, we thus find that it was not its theoretical principles (which indeed, oligarchies were open to sharing).[28] Instead, it was its practical dynamics of power.[29] Although Athens functioned as a quasi aristocracy in which only the members of the population who happened to be born male, native, and free were allowed to vote, this limited number of participants was still larger and less uniform in its personal and economic interests than the governing bodies of more traditionally aristo-

cratic states.[30] Where oligarchies displayed greater consistency in their policies and were less swayed by the physical wants of the general public,[31] *demokratia* more fully entrusted the welfare of the state to Plato's ungodly trinity of practice, making government various, reactive, and materialist like never before.

Plato was therefore not incorrect about *demokratia*—except in one respect: its three practical qualities were not as poor a foundation for government as he suspected. In the wake of the many failed idealisms of the twentieth century, democratic pragmatism has enjoyed a revival, buoyed by empirical studies that have suggested that it can be an effective way to reduce poverty, infant mortality, war, and other civic hardships.[32] Emerging alongside this new appreciation for the virtues of practical populism, moreover, has been a revival of the ancient pragmatism of Athens.[33] The revival began in earnest in the 1970s when Moses Finley noted: "The Greeks themselves did not develop a theory of democracy . . . The philosophers attacked democracy; the committed democrats responded by ignoring them, by going about the business of government and politics in a democratic way, without writing treatises on the subject."[34] Finley thus observed that even modern scholars who claimed to be sympathetic to Athenian democracy had been infected with Plato's academic bias. Aloof in their ivory garrets, they expected the essence of government to be found in a rational theory of first principles, whereas in actuality, democracy was a mishmash of practices hatched through the conduct of ordinary "business." Building on Finley's assessment, more recent scholars have sought the workings of *demokratia* in Athenian kitchen pottery and other market wares.[35] They have seen military service—in particular, the lowly drudgery of fleet rowing—as a practical "school" of democracy.[36] And they have observed the willingness of the Athenian demos to champion a "noble lie."[37] They have, in short, embraced the notion that there was something irreducibly worldly about ancient democracy. It was not an attempt to achieve utopia but a workmanlike effort to solve daily concerns, and befitting this pragmatic ambition, the evidence is that it succeeded. As Josiah Ober has recently observed, the "democratic institutions" of Athens yielded "superior economic and military performance," suggesting that while a variegated, materialistic, and reactive government may have been far from a Platonic ideal, it was nevertheless distinctly effective.[38]

To see Athenian *demokratia* like this is to open up a new way of thinking about the relationship between ancient comedy and democracy. If *demokratia* functioned less as a coherent set of political principles than as a practical

method for marshaling the variety, flexibility, and bodily feeling of the public to address their material concerns, then it does not make sense to measure the democratic character of Old Comedy by weighing its commitment to a consistently democratic ideology or a reliably antioligarchic set of politicians. Rather, we should look at whether it pressed to enlarge public authority in response to civic distress, and given the physical history of *demokratia,* one good place to begin is Aristophanes's Ionian War trilogy of *Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae,* and *Frogs*. The earlier two of these comedies were written after the annihilation of the Athenian army at Sicily, an event that spread such panic through the city that a group of four hundred oligarchs briefly seized control. The later comedy, meanwhile, was produced during the final grim phase of the war, as the Spartans ruthlessly targeted Athens's food supply before finally sacking the city itself. While other Old Comedies had their own civic problems to cope with, the Ionian War trilogy thus bore witness to outright disasters that pushed the Attic state to the brink of extinction. If comedy was antidemocratic, then there was never a better occasion to nudge the people toward the old promises of the aristocracy. But if comedy, like the other institutions of *demokratia,* was driven by public crisis, then it would certainly have pushed at this moment for a practical expansion of popular power.

And push, it did. The effort began with *Lysistrata,* which until a few decades ago, would not have needed its democratic credentials defended.[39] What could be more headlessly fleshly than a jumble of women who take to the streets to complain about the hurt of war? Modern scholars, however, have chipped away at the old reading of the play as a riot of *demokratia,*[40] observing that there is something disturbing about the fact that the women of the comedy gain power not by reasoned deliberation but by a sexual ploy that they quickly abandon to return to their household chores. This modern critique is a salutary reminder that *Lysistrata* is shot through with reactionary attitudes that have no place in democracy today. Yet as Plato's analysis of *demokratia* suggests, the failure of the play to sustain an ideological commitment to making women equal citizens need not disqualify it from being practically democratic. For on the ancient logic of *demokratia,* what matters is not whether *Lysistrata* pushes for a utopian ideal but whether it attempts to expand the franchise in response to a material difficulty that involves every level of society (including, to use Plato's term, the "poor"). And indeed, just such a hardship motivates the women of the play. Appalled by the "terrible physical troubles" besetting Athens,[41] the women describe these troubles in terms that

the poor would instantly have appreciated, equating them with nakedness and cold.[42]

By having women be the voice of discontent, *Lysistrata* thus identifies a civic concern that affected the franchised and the disenfranchised alike, and once again hewing to the logic of *demokratia,* Lysistrata proposes that the solution is to convert the latter into the former: "Mix everyone in: the immigrants [μετοίκους] and any friendly foreigners [ξένος] too. Also, our colonies—they're lying around like loose bits of wool. Join them into one great ball, and use it to weave a warm cloak for the public [δήμῳ] to wear" (579–86). Conspicuously absent from this appeal to "mix everyone in" is any mention of women. Yet by pushing for the incorporation of "immigrants" and "foreigners," the play makes its general commitment to *demokratia* clear. It is not outside elements that are the problem, nor is the solution to be found in elevating one particularly noble set of citizens to power. Rather, the best way to remedy the crisis is to expand the voting rolls, reaching out to marginalized groups and including them in the political process.[43]

Having urged a policy of inclusion, *Lysistrata* then goes on to justify it by claiming a practical value for pluralism. In part, this valuing of other voices is implicit in Lysistrata's wool-weaving metaphor, which, by spinning a civic lesson from a female domestic function, works as a gentle reminder of the public worth of life experiences beyond the ones known to citizen males.[44] But the play does not confine its support for pluralism to such subtle hints. It explicitly identifies diversity as a resource for addressing civic problems:

> *Calonice:* But what wise or illustrious things can women do? We sit at home all dolled up, wearing saffron gowns and lipstick and riverboat slippers.
> *Lysistrata:* That's exactly what I'm counting on to save Greece—our gowns and our shoes and our barely there dresses. (42–48)

Lysistrata, in other words, does not want women to aspire to a Platonic ideal of virtue or intelligence that they sexlessly share with men. She wants them to draw on their own distinct physical attributes—their near-sheer gowns and their fashionable shoes—to solve the crisis of the times.

This is, of course, an idiotic way to think about women. And yet it is not an idiotic way to think about democracy. After all, the women of the play *do* have different skills than their male counterparts, and while a modern audience might wonder whether skills such as wool weaving and riverboat slippering should be divvied up by sex, the skewed apportioning of these skills

does not diminish the potential usefulness of either fabric making or high fashion. Each has its own public function (especially in the sort of materialist society that, as Plato sighed, is inevitably the outcome of *demokratia*), and making good on this democratic logic, the material girls of *Lysistrata* leverage their sartorial skills to end the war. Filling male loins with the deepest ache of all—"It's just too hard! I can't even sit down to enjoy my food!"[45]—the seductively clad women lure the engorged combatants into chalking up their political disagreements to too-smart ambassadors who overthink everything. Female materialism has pointed the way to a fleshly common ground, and so while *Lysistrata* is hardly a template for equality, it provides a rough model of what Plato describes as the three core features of *demokratia*. Treating diversity as a tool for alleviating public distress, it supports the expansion of popular power not because it is ideal but because it can be useful.

This practical view of democracy was elaborated further by Aristophanes over his next two comedies, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*. The first was likely staged for the mixed crowd of Athenians and out-of-towners at the Festival Dionysa, a gathering that required a degree of political circumspection.[46] Yet despite this constraint, the play maintains *Lysistrata*'s emphasis on instrumental pluralism, beginning, in fact, with an explicit discussion of it.

> *Euripides:* You don't have to hear it all from me, because you'll soon see it for yourself.
> *In-law:* What? I don't need to hear?
> *Euripides:* Not what you're going to see.
> *In-law:* So I have to see?
> *Euripides:* Not what you're going to hear.
> *In-law:* How clever! So I don't need to hear or see?
> *Euripides:* (irritated) The point is that the eyes and ears are distinct [χωρὶς] in nature.[47]

By depicting the In-law's childlike mind, Euripides's professorial airs, and the ridiculous confusions that result, this exchange prepares the audience for ensuing scenes of comic mayhem. But even as Aristophanes indicates the source of the play's disasters, he also hints toward their ultimate resolution: two things that are "distinct in nature" will find a way to work together. Although the play is mostly frivolous, centering on a fanciful plot to infiltrate a women's ritual, it culminates in a genuine crisis: the In-law is caught and sentenced to death for violating a religious decree. This is an unexpectedly grim moment,

an intrusion of real violence into the world of comic play, and its seriousness inflects the solution. Initially, Euripides sets out to rescue the In-law by swinging down on a theatrical machine and spouting poetry. This scheme goes awry, however, when a cloddish guard proves unable to grasp the brilliance of the playwright's language, forcing Euripides to retreat in the realization that: "it's vain to feed subtle novelties [καινὰ σοφὰ] to fools [σκαιοῖσι]."[48] In this moment, Euripides discovers that there is not one master solution to every problem, for different situations require different approaches. Like a man who navigates by ear when the lights go out, Euripides therefore alters his method, and after charming a group of hostile women with his usual deftness of tongue, he then distracts the foolish guard with something less sophisticated: a naked dancing girl. Euripides, in effect, marshals sight and sound to overcome different obstacles, flattering the ear of the wise and seducing the eye of the dunce. The two distinct natures of the play's opening have combined to save the day.

Although the solutions of Old Comedy often seem the stuff of pure fantasy,[49] both *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae* thus model an instrumental pluralism that exploits the variety that Plato saw in *demokratia,* and in his next play, *Frogs,* Aristophanes took this populist project a step further. At the time that *Frogs* was produced, the war situation had worsened. Athens was drifting toward bankruptcy, and more worrying still, the Persian navy had offered its support to Sparta. To restore Athens to its former glory, the god Dionysus therefore sets off in the play to the underworld, declaring his intention to bring back a tragic playwright from the good old days. Before Dionysus can complete his mission, however, he faces a choice: which playwright in Hell is "the best."[50] Framed in this way, Dionysus's quest seems to obviate the possibility of pluralism. Rather than allowing for different styles of playwriting that are suited to different circumstances, it implies that one is in all cases superior. Yet when the time arrives for Dionysus to make his decision, it soon becomes clear that he must, in fact, choose between two entirely distinct forms of tragedy, each with its own functions and limitations. On the one hand, Aeschylus offers portraits of "noble men" in "mighty" language, while on the other, Euripides shows "daily business" in ordinary speech.[51] The former encourages people to be "high-minded" warriors but also makes them "foolish."[52] Meanwhile, the latter teaches people to be "clever" but transforms them into "outrageous rascals."[53] What Dionysus must weigh, then, are not two different playwrights who are striving for a common standard. Instead,

he must decide between two divergent styles of life, each of which has a strength that also doubles as a weakness (and by the same token, a weakness that also doubles as a strength).

In the end, Dionysus opts for Aeschylus, a choice that has often been taken as an indication that Aristophanes thought that pious simpletons were superior to clever skeptics.[54] Yet on the way to this decision, the play gives plenty of indications that the latter can be valuable too. Dionysus has such a hard time picking between Euripides and Aeschylus that he demurs repeatedly, and when he finally does decide, he is celebrated by the chorus for being "clever."[55] In other words, at the moment that Dionysus chooses Aeschylus's simple piety, the chorus praises the central element of Euripidean tragedy. This celebration of the defeated has occasionally led scholars to suggest that the wrong man wins (as when, in *The Clouds,* Wrong literally does), but part of what makes cleverness so compelling in *Frogs* is that it too can appreciate the value in its opposite. While Dionysus is wavering, Euripides craftily exhorts him to "Remember the gods,"[56] and so although it may be true that Aeschylus's triumph depends upon the skeptical discrimination taught by Euripides, it is equally clear that Euripides recognizes the persuasive force of Aeschylean piety. When Dionysus picks Aeschylus, the lesson is thus not that one version of tragedy is absolutely better than the other, but that one is better suited to the times. Since Euripides's urbane wit is currently failing to save the polis, another way must be found, for as Euripides himself puts it, "if we're having no luck now with the present lot, how could we possibly *not* be all right if we did the opposite?"[57] Here, playfully delivered, but urgently true, is the pragmatic logic of *demokratia.* The established way of doing things has not resolved the crisis, so it is time to reach out to alternatives.[58]

Having articulated the practical method of ancient democracy, *Frogs* then goes on to address the hanging question of Old Comedy's specific contribution to it. After all, if the ultimate drivers of *demokratia* are the bodily feelings and functional variety of the general public, and if these are determined at root by the personal constitution and circumstance of each individual, then what contribution of its own could comedy possibly make? Once the bodies of the public are released from constraint and invested with equal political authority, does *demokratia* not take care of itself? These questions will be answered in part by the following chapters, which will explore comedy's historical function as both a laboratory for refining democratic practices and a public forum for disseminating them. But such functions could conceivably be served by other forms of literature (or indeed, other forms of culture), and

so they continue to beg the question: Is there some special contribution that comedy, because of its particular form, can make to the functioning of democracy? Can comedy, like a good citizen of *demokratia,* play its own distinctly valuable—and so ultimately irreplaceable—civic role?

The answer provided by *Frogs* is that comedy is uniquely suited to investing the local problems of our bodies with a higher sense of gravity. As Plato points out, there is something absurd about the bodily logic of democracy: first we feast and make merry, but when that doesn't bring happiness, we panic and try to get thin, only to get dissatisfied and plunge off manically yet again. Democracy, in short, encourages a succession of political commitments that do not, at the end of the day, add up to a coherent identity. Instead, they suggest a kind of schizoid personality, ever running from one enthusiasm to the next. Such incoherence, moreover, is an issue not just for Platonists but for democratic citizens. By diminishing the dignity of the state, it reduces popular confidence in the political process, leading the people either to resist new policies or to accept them with a listlessness that weakens their force. To address this problem, democratic governments have historically sought to inspire public faith by dusting themselves with higher stuff: lofty declarations of inalienable rights, marble statues of Justice and Truth, civic rituals presided over by authorities in robes.[59] For the Athenians, much of this dusting could be found in their pantheon. Although the polis had no formal theology (and, in fact, tolerated a rich and continually evolving series of myths), it nevertheless possessed the sanctimony to put Socrates to death for speaking out against the gods. The result was a state religion that—like the concept of freedom itself—was indefinite enough to permit a continual bending of direction but strong enough to keep its citizens believing.

Promoting this flexible piety was one of the civic functions of the Athenian stage. Performed under the aegis of Dionysus, theater was a sacred space in which the demos could bear witness to the sublime majesty of its deities, bowing to Athena's inspired wisdom in the *Oresteia* or trembling at the wine-god's inscrutable power in the *Bakkhai.* But the theater was not just a site for veneration. It was also a place in which deities were literally brought down to earth. To watch gods bicker and upstage each other (as Apollo and Athena do at the end of the *Oresteia*) was to see the human face of the divine, and it was this quality of Greek tragedy that led to satyr plays such as Euripides's *Cyclops*. In these dramatic oddities, the sacred myths were rewritten to include drunken, cowardly, and inept deities who were every bit as absurd as Aristotle's caricature of democratic man. And so as the people sat and bore

witness to the craven sexuality and two-faced reversals of their theater gods, they were encouraged to believe that no matter how violent their own physical desires or twistings of political direction, they could still be one in nature with the holy.

In a topsy-turvy way, Greek tragedy was thus ennobling, and the same can be said of Old Comedy. No less than the satyr plays, Old Comedies delighted in parodying myth. In *Frogs,* Hercules is depicted as an oaf, the god of Hell as an anxious dinner host, and Dionysus as a braggart with loose attention and even looser bowels. Comedy, moreover, did not simply repeat tragedy's humanization of the divine. It helped complete the journey into material faith by deifying the human. Because comedy placed human concerns in a hallowed space, it invested them with a higher significance. In *Frogs,* Dionysus's choice between Aeschylus and Euripides is no symposium amusement. It is, the god of the underworld declares, the key to saving "our city."[60] With his first-person pronoun, the god identifies himself with the suffering Athenians, and this power of comedy to make mortal pain divine is similarly literalized by Lysistrata's oracle. Oracles were a favorite target of skeptics; dropped from the lips of frenzied women, their meaning was so plastic that Themistocles had famously been able to interpret a Sibylline mention of a "wooden wall" as an injunction to build a navy. But the Sybil's words were also treated with enormous public reverence—Themistocles got his navy, all two hundred triremes—and Lysistrata's oracle rides just this line. On one hand, its appearance is suspiciously convenient, as if Lysistrata has just scribbled it down herself. But on the other, its words are deeply compelling, inspiring the squabbling mob to see their partnership as "holy."[61] Summoning a lofty sense of purpose from a makeshift performance, it testifies to the consecrating power of comedy.

To suggest that Aristophanes's trilogy establishes this role for the comic stage in Athenian *demokratia* is not to install *Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae,* and *Frogs* as exemplars of democracy. They are riddled with moments—from the trivializations of women in *Lysistrata* to the xenophobic abuse of Kleophon in *Frogs*[62]—that should give modern democrats pause. But it is to suggest that Aristophanes's trilogy supported the less perfect, more pragmatic dynamics of Athenian populism in two ways. First, by acknowledging that the male citizens of Athens, the "best" playwright in history, and even the gods themselves could be ludicrous, the trilogy encouraged its audience to recognize that every authority had its limits. The best that could be said about any political course was that—like Aeschylus's foot-heavy lines—it answered the crisis of the times, making it wise to hold onto alternatives that might

prove their worth tomorrow. Second, by equating Athens's civic problems with hunger, indigestion, sexual pain, and the like, Aristophanes's trilogy focused its audience firmly on material concerns. Rejecting Plato's search for a higher existence, it promoted the practical logic of *demokratia* by putting the heavens themselves to work at worldly problem solving.

From the perspective of our own time, moreover, this Old Comic contribution to *demokratia* offers another potential gain, providing a way out of the ideological paradox that has recently ensnared the liberal-electoral model. Because Aristophanes's trilogy equates democracy not with a universal ideal of freedom but with the discovery that diversity is an effective resource for solving civic concerns, it avoids the contradiction of trying to impose liberty on others. Instead, like Plato's narrative account of the origins of *demokratia,* it treats freedom as something that emerges organically from human bodies. Since we are born with our own fleshly constitutions into our own physical contexts, we all possess a distinct set of material needs and wants that we naturally pursue. Comedy's democratic function in this corporeal environment is thus not to inculcate freedom, which is there (in the form of our individual drives) from the beginning. Rather, comedy's function is to help address a painful contradiction that these drives beget, for as the ancient democrats observed, the story of liberty takes a grim turn after its happily anarchic opening act. Since our bodies can only do what they want if they have the power to act on their desires, they instinctively try to free themselves from material constraint by mastering their surroundings. And as certain more powerful bodies manage to tame the earth with plows, animals with yokes, and other people with chains,[63] these apparent victors encounter a problem: by winning in the short term, they lose out in the long. While a king may have first claim to anything his society produces, that society will tend to produce less effective healthcare and technology, less innovative weapons and military tactics, and less varied cuisine and art than a society where everyone is empowered to pursue their own interests. In autocratic cultures, it is thus not just vassals who enjoy less bodily freedom. Monarchs do as well, revealing that the first step toward satisfying everyone's physical appetites is to banish our bodies' simplistic association of freedom with individual might. In keeping with the problem-solving practice of *demokratia,* that is, the beginnings of popular rule come not from installing a utopian ideal but from rooting out a physical error: the fleshly miscalculation that leads our bodies into striving for dominion.

It is in the debunking of this error, as Aristophanes's trilogy shows, that

comedy assumes its own most basic function in generating democracy. By dramatizing how the same crises that bring gods to their knees can be remedied by the eccentric and marginal, comedy testifies simultaneously to the failure of power and the worth of the disempowered, dismantling the whole logic of autocracy. This simple deconstructive action is by no means all that is needed to build democratic communities (which, as we will explore over later chapters, involve a complex and multilayered set of physical processes). But it is a practical start to build upon, and it points toward a second potential gain that modern democracies can take from ancient comedies: their bodily method. If our free diversity is both hatched from and endangered by our physical appetites, then a straightforward way to shift the balance in favor of democracy is to communicate directly with these appetites themselves. Modern empirical studies have supported the effectiveness of such fleshly methods of promoting popular rule,[64] and ancient comedy is full of them. Making our bellies rumble and our hearts leap in ways that (as Plato scowled) are so subrational as to be positively animal, comedy deftly speaks the language of our lower regions.

Getting a hold of the precise grammar of this language is not easy—to explain a joke is to destroy it. But we can learn a little more about the bodily dialect of comedy by turning to another group of ancient practitioners who earned Plato's baffled dismay: the rhetoricians.[65] In pointed contrast to the utopian philosopher, these public speakers were aggressive pragmatists who were so committed to swaying their audience's flesh that they were known to declare that rational speeches were not really speeches at all.[66] The rhetoricians were, moreover, deep students of comedy. They claimed it as a training ground for oratory, and to better learn from it, they devised a series of experimental methods (subsequently refined and expanded by orators from Renaissance Europe to nineteenth-century America) for teasing out the ways in which comic narratives, characters, and other dramatic techniques could influence people's feelings, habits, and behaviors.[67] More recently, these rhetorical methods have become a quiet casualty of the utopian turn in modern democratic thinking.[68] If, after all, we view democracy primarily as a result of critical reflection, conscious idealism, and other autonomous forms of deliberation, then it makes little sense to turn to a practical toolkit for exploring comedy's grubbier effects on the public's flesh. Yet if we accept with Aristophanes that we do not always need to think deeply to promote democracy but—like Dionysus as he buffoons his way through Hell—can be guided by our guts and lusts, then the experimental techniques of the old orators can

become useful once again. Over the preceding pages, I have relied lightly on these techniques (for example, by treating the characters of *Lysistrata, Ecclesiazusae,* and *Frogs* as behavioral models to imitate). And in the chapters to come, I will use them more deeply and explicitly, drawing on rhetoric handbooks from Quintilian's *Institutes* to Caleb Bingham's *The Columbian Orator* to get a tighter handle on the visceral political work that comedy can do.

Even as Aristophanes's trilogy puts us back in touch with this pragmatic approach to growing popular rule, however, it also demands that we look beyond Old Comedy to explore it further. For despite the popular success of *Frogs*—which won the olive wreath from its delighted crowd—it is the last surviving comedy of its kind. Aristophanes's final two plays, *Ecclesiazusae* and *Wealth,* are rooted in more abstract concerns: the women in *Ecclesiazusae* complain vaguely that the ship of state is adrift, while the characters of *Wealth* fret that virtue is not always materially rewarded. Unlike *Lysistrata* and *Frogs,* that is, these plays do not start with a crisis that is physically endangering the polis. Instead, they begin with a general sense that things could be better. Their focus is thus less on physical problem solving than on idealism, and as such, both plays leave the mechanics of practical pluralism behind. The communist society of *Ecclesiazusae* was later reborn in Plato's *Republic,* while *Wealth* was celebrated in the Middle Ages as a proto-Christian allegory, so that Aristophanes's Old Comedy found itself ending in a pair of utopian philosophies.[69] Perhaps this shift was driven by the improved material conditions of the Athenian people. No longer experiencing the terrible suffering of the 400s, they had received a cash infusion from Persia, formed an alliance against Sparta, and resuscitated their fleet enough to colonize the islands of Scyros, Imbros, and Lemnos. Or perhaps it was driven by some private development in the playwright's worldview or artistic process. But whatever the cause, comedy drifted away from its pragmatic democratic function, and by the time Aristophanes died in 386 BCE, Old Comedy itself had vanished from the stage.

Fortunately for subsequent democracies, however, comic *demokratia* did not vanish too. Comedy continued to be written and performed in Greece, and by the late fourth century BCE (shortly after Alexander the Great pacified Athens), it had evolved into the wildly popular love plots of Menander and the New Comics. This pivot toward romance has often been taken to indicate a waning of the democratic function of comedy; shorn of its critical tongue and dissipating its energy in wordplay and matchmaking, comedy lost its political edge. As the preceding discussion has suggested, however, there is

no reason why comedy's shift toward affairs of the heart should have diminished its democratic potential. After all, if the origins of *demokratia* lay in ordinary, bodily concerns, then the trials and tribulations of lovers were as good a starting point as any to model a populist ethics. And as I will suggest over the final pages of this chapter, Aristophanes's model of plural problem solving and his method of myth making were both kept alive in Greek and Roman New Comedy, from where they would eventually be transmitted to the early modern world.

The most complete surviving Greek New Comedy is Menander's *Dyskolos,*[70] and it begins in populist style by briskly deflating an aristocratic alternative to democratic pluralism: princely partnerships.[71] Unable to get his hands on the girl of his dreams, the socialite Sostratos seeks out his comrade Khaireas, hoping that another wealthy, young, Athenian male can help.[72] Sostratos, that is, turns to a second version of himself, following philosophical theories of friendship that tacitly supported oligarchy by urging the well-to-do to put their faith in each other.[73] Initially, these theories seem validated by the play, for Khaireas declares that he can do whatever Sostratos needs: if the wooing requires caution, he will be circumspect; if it requires boldness, he will act without thinking.[74] The young nobleman has, however, no sooner made this boast than he fails the test of practice. Assaulted by the girl's singular father, a frothing Grouch who hurls clods of mud, Khaireas hurriedly retreats, pretending that he will return another day. The man who aspires to fit his behavior to any and all circumstances has found himself unable to adapt.

This brief episode emphasizes both the need for a flexible approach to life and the insufficiency of oligarchy for providing it. The princely Khaireas is incapable of shifting from caution to boldness, for as Machiavelli would later observe, "the careful man, when it comes time to be daring, can't do it, and is destroyed."[75] On this pragmatic logic, Sostratos's turn to Khaireas is doomed from the start. New ideas cannot come from the same old source, and given that Sostratos has proved unable to handle the Grouch, his clone cannot be expected to find success. However, even as Sostratos is let down by his oligarchic upbringing, he is rescued by the pluralism of the demos. Stumbling blindly toward the object of his desire, Sostratos happens upon the girl's half-brother Gorgias, a rustic with whom he has nothing in common.[76] Where Sostratos has idled his life away in expensive clothes, Gorgias is caked in sweat and worn-out leather. Yet in spite of Gorgias's failure to match Sostratos's aristocratic ideal of a friend, the two form a fast bond, for, as Sostratos bluntly observes: "By god, you'll be useful [χρήσιμός] to me."[77] Here, Sostratos ges-

tures toward the possibility of a practical partnership between rich man and rustic, challenging Khaireas's earlier claim that farmers are "extremely bitter" and to be avoided.[78] And indeed, after Sostratos begins his relationship with Gorgias, it soon becomes evident that the country is not a failed version of the city but a useful complement.[79] Where Sostratos's upbringing has made him ambitious and entrepreneurial, his new comrade is humble and industrious, and the play suggests that Gorgias's virtues are no accident. They result from country living and are shared by even the Grouch himself: "if the world lived like me there wouldn't be courts and prisons and wars, but we'd all be content [ἠγάπα] with a modest amount [μέτρι]."[80] This insight is not lost on Sostratos, and he determines not to assimilate his bride into his city lifestyle, but to preserve her country upbringing.[81]

In keeping with the pluralism of Aristophanic comedy, moreover, *Dyskolos* does not pair this positive take on a rustic lifestyle with a sneer at urbanism. Although the Grouch claims that city dwellers are scurrilous and depraved, the end of the play reveals that the country has something to gain from them, too. After Gorgias refuses to marry into Sostratos's family for fear that it will be corrupting—"I don't want too much [τρυφαν]; I only want the things I've scraped together [συλλεξάμενον] for myself"—he is promptly mocked for being crazy.[82]

> *Sostratos' Father:* You've got nothing, and you think you're better? I've admitted your worth, so accept mine.
>
> *Gorgias:* Okay, okay. I'd be poor *and* crazy if I didn't accept the safety net [σωτηρίαν] of your money.[83]

City life, in short, might not be perfect, but it has its benefits, too. And although the Grouch remains the most resistant on this point, even he finally concedes to Gorgias: "Perhaps I made a mistake, thinking I could go it alone [αὐτάρκης] . . . Please: bring my daughter a husband. I'm too picky to do it myself."[84] Realizing that he has succumbed to the country version of Khaireas's superciliousness, the Grouch admits that he too needs help, and in a cheerfully materialistic illustration of the practical worth of others, the resulting wedding is justified as an exercise in economic diversification. Noting that "property [χρημάτων] is an uncertain business [ἀβεβαίου πράγματος]" and that "everything you have comes from fortune [τύχης],"[85] the rich acknowledge that it is wise to marry the poor, for when Fortune's wheel swings the other way, loss will be balanced out by gain.

This same worldly pragmatism informs Menander's fragmentary plays,[86]

but more importantly for posterity, it was transmitted to the later New Comics Plautus and Terence. Displaying the Roman enthusiasm for all things useful, these playwrights appreciated the value of a practical pluralism that, like the Republic itself, treated the expansion of political rights as a method for guarding against the material uncertainty of Fortune. So it is that Plautus follows Menander in debunking aristocratic friendship for an expanding community of problem-solving (and often politically marginalized) collaborators,[87] while Terence stocks his comedies with diverse partnerships that include foreigners, women, and (as we will explore at some length in chapter 2) slaves.[88] In addition to perpetuating Greek comedy's symbiotic logic, moreover, the New Comics also laid claim to Old Comedy's other populist function: the investing of human concerns with sacred importance. Menander had kept this sanctifying power alive in moments such as Sostratos's bold declaration: "It'll all work out. I prophesize it myself, Pan."[89] And it was similarly continued by Terence's comic heroes, one of whom goes so far as to transmute his own bad luck into the goddess Fortune herself: "it was by chance . . . some chance or fortune . . . O Fortune, your kindness never lasts!"[90] For the Romans, as for Lysistrata centuries before, comedy was a useful tool for spinning worldly hurt into a higher matter.

A century after Terence's death, the Roman Republic itself expired, destroyed by a series of shocks that began with the failure of Sulla's Constitution and culminated in the ascension of Octavius.[91] And as the Republic faded into memory, so did the comic tradition described above. No new playwrights emerged to continue the innovations begun by Aristophanes and the New Comics. Instead, ancient comedy was appropriated over the Middle Ages by scholastic metaphysicians who mined its scripts for aesthetic ideals, encyclopedic categories, and philosophical definitions.[92] These cloistered academics were not interested in useful remedies for physical pain or in ways to invest human concerns with a sacred urgency. They had their eyes upon a once and future king, and as they dissected ancient comedy into moral laws and syllogisms, it lost its radically worldly function.[93] This function was not, however, lost for good. In the streets outside the library walls, popular comedy continued to thrive, bubbling up into such extraordinary (and semitheatrical) works as *The Decameron* of Boccaccio and *The Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer. And finally, in the sixteenth century, ancient comedy itself was restored to the stage by Machiavelli and his Italian contemporaries. When this revival came, moreover, it came with the same irrepressible, outspreading force that had so delighted its original audiences. As the following chapters will show, the

Florentine and his heirs reached back into Plautus and Terence, recovering not just their problem-solving pluralism and their practical piety but five other ancient comic practices that promoted *demokratia*: impetuousness, adaptive imitation, the pursuit of indolence, eccentric government, and laughing together.

Fortune Favors the Impetuous

Although Machiavelli dedicated himself to writing about power, he spent most of his life sorely deprived of it. After helping to organize the Florentine militia in his younger years, he was stripped of this responsibility by the Medici, tortured by hanging, and thrown into an exile where he was reduced to catching sparrows for food.[1] His subsequent attempts to style himself as a political sage were ignored by his superiors, and in the end, he was forced to earn his way by pandering from the stage: "I wish you the best, dear audience—since your kindness depends on me pleasing you."[2] Such humiliations would have compromised the reputation of most self-proclaimed experts on power, but, characteristically, Machiavelli turned them to advantage. Where previous political writers had mused on the ways to gain and consolidate authority, he did exactly the inverse. Associating success not with the acquisition of power but with the banishing of impotence, he claimed that to climb high, we first had to examine the shackles holding us low. As he sums up this iconoclastic method in the dedication to *The Prince,* "To understand the nature of a prince, you need to ask the people."[3] Free from the delusions of command, the people had come to appreciate the deep powerlessness of human existence: "you can never avoid one trouble without hitting another, and so rather than dreaming of complete happiness, a prudent man contents himself with picking the lesser ill."[4] Having taught the prince this empowering pragmatism, moreover, the people could then instruct him on the finer points of its implementation. For since the blood and toil of "ordinary life" had acquainted them with each and every suffering,[5] no one could speak with more authority on which was the lesser ill to pick.

As Machiavelli admitted, he was not the first to recognize the worldly wis-

dom of the low and humble. He had learned it from comedy, which had for thousands of years celebrated the savviness of prostitutes, slaves, and other hard-knock heroes from the street.[6] These gutter triumphants were introduced to Machiavelli and his schoolmates as a "mirror" of "ordinary life,"[7] and they inspired the Florentine to take a life-long interest in comedy Old and New; after producing a youthful imitation of Aristophanes,[8] he continued writing comic plays into the twilight of his days, penning the Plautus-inspired *Clizia* two years before he died.[9] Machiavelli's interest in comedy was therefore continuous with—and perhaps even predated—his political pragmatism, and both of the comic techniques explored in chapter 1 figure heavily in his writings on real-world government. *The Prince,* as we saw above, begins on a note of practical pluralism, and in the *Discorsi,* Machiavelli carries it a step further: "Republics outlive princedoms and are better off, because the diversity of their citizens enables them to adapt better to the diversity of the times."[10] Just as famously, meanwhile, *The Prince* and the *Discorsi* espouse a practical piety, claiming the gods of Rome (and possibly the Ten Commandments too) as useful fictions that encouraged the general public to rein in their animal desires for a greater civic good.[11] As I will explore over the following pages, moreover, Machiavelli's debt to the old comic populism went beyond these two foundational practices. By drawing on the rhetorical method of analysis sketched in chapter 1, I will trace how the Florentine used his comedy *La Mandragola* to adapt a narrative trick known as *impetuoso* from Plautus and Terence,[12] fashioning it into a democratic tool that would one day help Thomas Paine spark a revolution.

La Mandragola is filled with the usual physical concerns of ancient comedy. There is the lovelorn young man who can't sleep a wink.[13] There is the scavenger tormented by hunger. There is the woman harassed by lechers. And binding these concerns into a single plot is yet another bodily problem: the inability to reproduce. For try as he might, the rich man Nicia cannot get himself an heir. In keeping with the civic logic of ancient comedy, this personal difficulty is explicitly linked by *La Mandragola* to a public one: "The probable cause of your sterility is impotence [*impotenzia*]."[14] Nicia, in other words, suffers from what Machiavelli saw as the downfall of all would-be authorities—their *impotenzia*—embodying in his childlessness the physical incapacity of every failed prince.[15] Prior to Machiavelli, similar comic equations of civic and sexual inability had been used by Aristophanes to great effect,[16] and in keeping with the Old Comedies described in chapter 1, the

solution in *La Mandragola* is achieved through an enfranchisement. Kidnapping a "street youth [*garzonaccio*]" to inseminate his wife, Nicia shores up his princely dominion by literally incorporating a pleb.

This route to popular empowerment is, without question, an abomination. Among the most obvious of its faults are its coerciveness, its fraudulence, and its misogyny. Yet, as the play goes on to demonstrate, if Nicia's behavior is hardly an ideal starting point for democracy, it is nevertheless a remarkably practical one. When Nicia acknowledges his dependence on the sexual potency of a outsider, he tacitly concedes that there is a limit to his own power, and once he sets off down this road, he discovers the need to enfranchise more and more of his social inferiors. Most immediately, there is the vagabond Ligurio. First, Ligurio gains control of Nicia's purse: "Give me twenty-five ducats."[17] Then, of his speech: "You let me do the talking, and don't say a word unless I tell you."[18] Then, of his cupboard: "We went to your cellar to enjoy a bottle of wine."[19] And, finally, of his entire household: "Thanks for the key."[20] Ligurio, moreover, is not the only one who achieves power through Nicia's acknowledgement of his *impotenzias*. There is also the play's most dispossessed group: the women. Women are regarded with near total contempt by the males of Florence. As the friar sums up the prevailing attitude, "Females are so brainless that if a girl can string together two words, she's hailed as a preacher."[21] Nicia quickly learns, however, that he must empower these marginal creatures to get what he wants. First, he reluctantly deputizes his mother-in-law to help out with his schemes.[22] Then he finds himself handing authority to his wife, Lucrezia, whose involvement in his plotting makes her suddenly "bold."[23] Emerging from her bedchamber to dispute Nicia's instructions, she prompts him to turn to his male companions in dismay: "Did you hear her talk back? Like *she's* the man!"[24]

In seizing these enfranchisements, Ligurio and Lucrezia are not, *La Mandragola* makes clear, striking a blow for equality. They are simply relieving their own physical distress. Ligurio, we learn at the beginning, is an out-of-work marriage broker, who, needing some other way to survive, has taken to "begging for his dinner."[25] Ligurio's motive, in other words, is hunger, and while he is careful to insist that he wants only to be a good friend, he hurries off at the first opportunity to fill his growling stomach. He has not, we are told, eaten all day.[26] Meanwhile, Lucrezia and the women of the play are dealing with an equally urgent physical demand. As the mother-in-law puts it succinctly, "A woman who has no children has no home. If her husband dies, she's abandoned like a beast [*bestia*]."[27] Women, that is, have the slightest of

footholds in human society. If they can build up a family, securing a husband and raising children, they will be protected. But if they cannot, they will find themselves back in a state of nature, an animal that must survive the wilds on its own.

By foregrounding Ligurio and Lucrezia's physical concerns in this way, *La Mandragola* revives the pragmatic materialism that Machiavelli admired about the Romans and their comedy. Unlike most of Machiavelli's contemporaries, who used comedy to perpetuate the idealized marriages imagined by the Catholic Church, the Roman playwrights Terence and Plautus had portrayed happiness as something to be wrested from the indignities of physical circumstance. To this end, the hero of their comedies was often (like Terence himself) a slave. Constantly threatened with beatings and even death, the comic slave exemplified the frailty of the human body. His greatest ambition was to be free from pain, and as he brilliantly dodged the cudgels of life, he demonstrated the ingenuity that could be born of material need. By making heroes out of slaves, Roman comedy thus illustrated the paradox of power in a problem-driven world: those who were born without potency learned better how to manufacture it. Teaching themselves to flatter and manipulate, to pounce on unexpected moments of luck, and to partner with anyone who could help, the slaves of comedy had accumulated a series of useful tricks for getting their own way, modeling the street empowerment that Machiavelli would later depict in *La Mandragola.*

For all that the democratic dynamic of *La Mandragola* was indebted to Roman comedy, however, Machiavelli went well beyond his ancient guides in exploring its possibilities. In ancient comedy, popular rule is inevitably short-lived. After the women of *Lysistrata* extricate Greece from civil war, they are not rewarded with seats in government but are ushered back to their homes, and the same goes for the clever heroines of New Comedy. Once the plucky lead of Menander's *Perikeiromene* helps reunite her family, she is repaid with a marriage that literally silences her.[28] Nor do the slaves of New Comedy achieve anything more lasting. Their usual recompense is simply to escape a beating, and even the genius of Pseudolus does not emancipate him. No sooner has he impishly bragged about his triumph to his master—"Your sorrow fills my heart with gladness" —than he betrays a flicker of fear at the prospect of incurring the "anger" of his superiors and quickly offers to forget his little victory if his owner goes out drinking with him.[29]

In contrast to these ancient models, *La Mandragola* ends with its democratic community intact. Nicia has no idea that he has been tricked into hand-

ing his wife over to another man, and so he heartily welcomes Ligurio into his household. The women, meanwhile, are anything but silenced. Indeed, they dominate the play's final exchange. Lucrezia orders her husband, "Give the holy man ten ducats," to which Nicia can only assent with a beleaguered groan.[30] Meanwhile, the newly moneyed friar winks that the mother-in-law has got back her "youthful vigor," prompting her to smile back: "Who wouldn't be feeling frisky [*allegra*]?"[31] And so even as Nicia heads inside, dreaming of a son who makes him feel more potent than ever, the balance of power has been fundamentally rearranged. The low and humble have recognized their authority, and they have no plans to give it up.

What gives this redistribution of power its durability in *La Mandragola* is the play's elaboration of a populist practice that the Roman comics called *audacia* (and that Machiavelli referred to as *impetuoso*). To most of the Machiavelli's contemporaries, the thing he seemed most to have learned from the Romans was fraud, and certainly, the ending of *La Mandragola* is nothing if not a massive hoax at Nicia's expense. But the community that forms at curtain drop is brought into being by more than just deception. Its beginnings lie in the young man's oath to do anything to obtain Lucrezia, no matter how "bestial, ruthless, or nefarious,"[32] and although Ligurio feigns horror at this declaration, insisting that the youth not be so "impetuous [*impeto*]," the society that results from his plan is just this: bestial, ruthless, nefarious, and most of all, impetuous. After all, the truly shocking thing about the play is not that it closes with a lie. It is that the lie is so reckless. A man has been tricked first into giving his wife a fake potion, then into kidnapping a random streetwalker for a murderous self-cuckolding, and finally into inviting the participants in this conspiracy (who include his friend, his wife, his mother-in-law, a priest, and a half-educated Italian who claims to be a Parisian doctor) to eat lunch each afternoon at his house (while the fake doctor sneaks upstairs to bed his wife). Could anyone believe that such an outrageous deception could go undetected?

Yet though the audacity of the lie seems to doom it to a brief existence, Machiavelli himself suspected otherwise. In *The Prince,* he identifies boldness as the key to worldly success: "Fortune loves young men, because they are less cautious [*meno respettivi*] and more daring [*più audacia*]." Indeed, he puts his finger on the very quality that characterizes the lie of *La Mandragola*: "it is better to be impetuous [*impetuoso*]." Supporting this confidence in impetuousness, moreover, was a long tradition of comedy. The claim that daring brought good luck was a popular one in Roman antiquity, making its way into

both Livy's *History of Rome* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.[33] But long before it appeared in either of these—or any other surviving—works, it sounded from the comic stage: "Fortune favors the bold."[34] In a plot point that made a few later grammarians smirk, the comedic mouthpiece for this line was not a conquering king but a piece of human chattel: Geta, the slave. However, that a slave should offer practical advice on beating fortune was not a joke.[35] From the dawn of Roman comedy, slaves had acknowledged the blind cruelty of life—"Fortune upsets a hundred mortal plans"—without becoming pessimists.[36] As the shackled hero of Plautus's *Captivi* declares, "Fortune shapes us as she likes: once a freeman, I am now a slave."[37] Here in its bluntest form is the fatalist claim that chance rules everything. Yet the occasion for this remark is a bold attempt to change bad luck to good. Although the slave claims to have once been a freeman, this is a lie he is using to effect an escape, so at the very moment that he seems to admit the omnipotence of Fortune, he is in fact daring to challenge her.

As counterintuitive as this connection between lowliness and luck making might seem, Roman comedy substantiated it by suggesting that boldness was empowering in a fundamentally democratic way. To begin with, boldness was not a quality typically possessed by the ruling classes. Although the slaves' masters were often prone to taking ridiculous chances (typically of the romantic variety), they did not actually see their behavior as risky. Instead, because they had been lulled into overconfidence by the bubble of their prosperity, they believed that their most outlandish ambitions would automatically succeed. When reality intruded and they felt the first pangs of failure, their reaction was inevitably sheer panic. The same misfortune that stiffens Geta's spine leads his master to despair: "I'm fucked."[38] Situations that required genuine boldness were therefore instantly empowering to slaves, for they had learned a resilience that their masters had only dreamed about. The boldness of slaves, moreover, did not just turn the existing power structure on its head. It flattened authority completely, for it exposed the slaves' own physical limitations in a way that made them co-dependent as well. Take, for example, the archetypal comic slave: Pseudolus. After his master, Calidorus, discovers that he cannot afford to buy the courtesan he loves, Pseudolus brazenly promises the young man that he will produce the money himself. Moments later, Calidorus's father tries to crush this plot by warning Pseudolus that no one will lend him any cash, to which Pseudolus even more brazenly rejoins: "Then I'll *steal* the money. From *you*."[39] Pseudolus's bravado would seem a recipe for either total disaster or heroic achievement,[40] but instead, its result is a hum-

bling moment that opens the door to a cooperative success. No sooner has Pseudolus launched his plan than Fortune upsets it, prompting the slave to remember the hard-earned wisdom that has guided him through earlier crises: "Choose the best of two bad things."[41] Pseudolus, that is, turns to the same street maxim that Machiavelli would articulate in *The Prince*: "a prudent man . . . picks the lesser ill." And as far as Pseudolus is concerned, the lesser ill in this case is to forget his dreams of individual glory and reach out for assistance to a second slave.[42]

Rather than elevating Pseudolus to the status of a hero, his boldness thus makes him reliant on another member of the dispossessed, and in keeping with the logic of comedy, what makes the second slave useful is that he, too, has learned the empowering lesson of impotence. At a crucial moment, he is challenged by a hostile pimp, prompting Pseudolus to panic: "Now we're in a world of shit!"[43] The second slave, however, does not despair. Instead, he becomes more daring, involving the pimp in another falsehood that he invents on the spot. The pragmatic logic behind this bold action is instantly appreciable to Pseudolus, who has already noted the wisdom of choosing "future" disasters over "present" ones.[44] Adding a temporal twist to the hard-knock strategy of picking the lesser ill, the slaves recognize that since there is no guarantee beyond the here and now, trouble tomorrow is always better than trouble today. If your con unravels, the smart play is thus to feed your mark another lie—no matter how potentially calamitous—and to Pseudolus's relief, his ally's improvised fiction reels in the pimp. Disaster is booted down the road, and although the play ends at this point, the narrative trajectory is clear: by kicking trouble into the future, the two slaves have ensured that they will encounter it again. And when they do, they will again need to reach out for help, so that two slaves will become three, will become four, will become many. Pseudolus's initial gamble has, in effect, set off a positive feedback loop where success emerges out of risks that trigger further crises that require more risk takers, replacing a single master with a snowballing community of impetuous slaves.

This model of empowerment became a staple of later Roman comedy. In Terence's *Andria*—a comedy that Machiavelli liked so much he translated it[45]—things begin when a young master recklessly promises to wed his girlfriend without obtaining his father's permission. Furious, his father arranges another marriage. The young master immediately despairs, but his slave Davus counsels him to accept the second marriage—it will, Davus assures him, almost certainly fall through. In effect, just like Pseudolus, Davus urges

his master to take the better of two bad choices: a future marriage (which might not even occur) over his father's looming rage. Predictably, the result of this boldness is to precipitate another crisis. The second marriage goes ahead, and the unhappy groom finds himself moments away from the altar. Yet once again, Davus responds by punting trouble into the future: "I'll tell my master I'm working on another plan, if only to prolong this mess a little longer."[46] And once again, his daring pays off. In the time he gains, he stumbles on a man whom fortune has reduced to a "beggar,"[47] and partnering together, the two indigents manage to extricate themselves.

Prior to Machiavelli, this impetuous populism had already made its way from Roman comedy onto the Renaissance stage. Ariosto's *La Cassaria* (1508) begins with two young men—Erofilo and Caridoro—who are in love with a pair of courtesans held fast by an avaricious pimp.[48] One of their servants, Volpino, hatches a plan to help, and in keeping with the model of Roman comedy, it is a scheme long on daring. Volpino's bright idea is to use an expensive casket owned by Erofilo's father to barter with the pimp. After the pimp accepts the casket as payment for the courtesans, Volpino will then summon the governor to recover the "stolen" property from the pimp, returning it to Erofilo's house before his father finds it missing. Volpino, in effect, plans to deceive not only the pimp but his master's father and even the governor, prompting another servant to remark: "Your plot is like a field of flowers—filled with thistles."[49] And so it is that things get weedy. Arriving home early to discover his casket gone, Erofilo's enraged father interrupts the proceedings, and it is not long before Volpino finds himself in chains. Yet just as in *Pseudolus,* the plot is rescued by a second member of the underclass, a servant called Fulcio. Witnessing Volpino's fall, Fulcio curses "fickle Fortune [*la mutabil Fortuna*]," but like the slaves of Roman comedy, Fulcio does not quail before the power of chance.[50] Instead, he sees an opportunity for "glory [*la gloria*]" and rushes in.[51] Boldly tricking Erofilo's father into participating in Volpino's harebrained scheme, this second servant dispenses with the pimp, gets both masters their loves, and ends the play proclaiming his "*virtù.*"[52]

By the time that Machiavelli penned the "impetuous" ending to *La Mandragola,* he could thus look back on a popular tradition of Italian and Roman comedy that treated such daring as a practical basis for empowerment. Not content merely to repeat his sources, however, Machiavelli suggested in his own play that the disenfranchised did not need to wait (as previous comic slaves and servants had done) for moments of princely overreaching to assert themselves. Instead, they could instigate such overreaching themselves. Li-

gurio gets things going by telling Nicia that he has found a doctor who can concoct a "potion that cannot fail to get you an heir."[53] Then, when he produces this "doctor" (really Ligurio's benefactor in a cheap disguise), he announces that the potion will be ready tonight, prompting an eager Nicia to respond that he will take it to his wife immediately.[54] It is only at this point, when Nicia is already rushing ahead to imagine the joyful sight of his newborn son, that the "doctor" reveals that the fertility potion has an unfortunate, lethal, side-effect that will require Nicia to prostitute his spouse. Nicia is shocked by the doctor's disclosure—"I don't want to pimp my wife out!"[55] But now that he is dashing forward, he finds it hard to turn around, and carried on by his physical momentum, he agrees to the unthinkable, allowing another man into his bed.

In this scene, Machiavelli thus illustrates how the same dynamic that slaves use to empower themselves can also be used to dispossess their masters. The only difference is that where slaves are intentionally bold, their masters must be tricked into charging ahead. Nicia, of course, is not difficult to dupe—he is universally despised as a fool. But a few moments later, Ligurio pulls the identical scam on a much more wily authority: the church. The cunning of churchmen is a running topic of the play. Ligurio observes that men of the cloth are highly "astute [*astute*]," "rationally minded [*ragionevole*]," and versed in "worldly things [*cose del mondo*]," and the friar of the play lives up to this billing.[56] Adept at fleecing others, he is well aware that Ligurio is working some sort of angle. Yet as events reveal, his cleverness does not save him from the trick that catches Nicia. The snare is laid when Ligurio approaches the friar and asks for a favor. Nicia, he says, left his niece in the care of a convent, only to discover that she is now several months pregnant. To save the reputation of everyone involved, Nicia needs the priest to convince the girl to take a potion that will make her miscarry. In return, Nicia promises to make a sizeable donation to the church. This is a lie, for Nicia has no such niece. The friar, though, is unaware that Ligurio is weaving an elaborate fiction, and he agrees to the plan, noting that it will be good for the girl, the convent, and the church. All that will suffer is "a senseless piece of flesh, not even born."[57] Indeed, he so warms to the scheme that he becomes highly distressed when Ligurio returns to tell him that the girl has miscarried all on her own. Sensing the friar's anguish, Ligurio assures him that there is another problem that needs his attention, prompting the holy man to respond: "What is it? I'm with you to the end [*in termine*]. I feel that there's a contract, a familiarity [*dimestichezza*] between us, and there's nothing I won't do."[58] With this enthusiastic

promise, the friar reveals that Ligurio's preceding story has got him rushing ahead. And having already countenanced an early-term abortion (an act that the medieval church saw as halfway to murder),[59] the friar does not blink when Ligurio asks him to go "to the end" and partner in an actual homicide.

The friar is himself well aware that he has been manipulated in this way, and he sums up Ligurio's strategy in a pithy sentence: "From a distance, many things seem terrible, difficult, and strange, that, when you approach them, become human, tolerable, and familiar."[60] By using the word "familiar [*dimestiche*]," the friar returns to the term he used to describe Liguria's initial request—*dimestichezza*—acknowledging that Ligurio has succeeded in maneuvering him, step by step, onto strange ground by baiting him with friendly-looking things. Or, as Nicia will colorfully put it later: "First this devil Ligurio got me to stick my finger in, then my arm, and finally my whole body."[61] What seemed within his grasp was just a trick by Ligurio to lure him into overreaching.

Having devised this streetwise method for initiating *impetuoso,* Machiavelli's comedy then proceeded to enlarge its effects. Although works like *La Cassaria* and *Pseudolus* had modeled the emergence of a practical pluralism, they had never implied that this process had any bearing outside of the imagined world of the play. Indeed, it was often claimed in antiquity that slaves were allowed to prosper in comedy because it was hilariously unthinkable for them to do so in real life.[62] What Terence would have thought of this assessment we can only guess, but the former slave obligingly wrapped up his comedies by restoring the social order, and *La Cassaria* similarly ends with the successful servant handing his hard-earned loot to his master: "You take it all."[63] In contrast, *La Mandragola* concludes, as we have seen, by maintaining the power of Lucrezia and Ligurio, and indeed, far from imposing the logic of the real world onto the play world, it breaks the fourth wall and extends its comic power-snatch into the seats. The grab begins in the prologue when Machiavelli accosts his audience: "If you think you can intimidate me by jeering, let me warn you: I can get nasty too."[64] With this defiant snarl, the playwright ushers his audience into the authority-busting dynamic of his play. They may be the ones with the power, but like Pseudolus, Machiavelli is confident that he can get the better of his master.

And get the better, he does. For just as Ligurio catches Nicia and the friar by playing on their hopes for easy success, so too does *La Mandragola* entrap its audience. This audience has, after all, been conditioned by previous theater-going experiences to expect that comic plays will serve up a happy

ending,[65] and Machiavelli's prologue, in between its threats, gives its spectators every reason to expect that just such a pleasant outcome is on the way. As the playwright declares, his work concerns a young gentleman, worthy of honor (*l'onor*) and esteem (*pregio*), who ingeniously seduces a "shrewd" young woman (*una giovane accorta*). With a wink, he thus acknowledges that—like other matters of the heart—this play will involve some low dealing. But the young man's decency implies that it will all be handled with good intentions, while the young woman's intelligence suggests that she will not be a helpless victim but an equal player in a battle of wits. To further assuage the audience, the prologue leaves out any mention that the woman is married; for all they know, she is the daughter of the foolish lawman whom Machiavelli gleefully promises to hoodwink. In short, in the same way that Ligurio draws in the friar by leaving out the disturbing features of his plot and emphasizing the familiar and pleasant ones, so too does Machiavelli rope his audience in. They have come to laugh and see a little wit and romance, and he will be happy to oblige.

Then, just as Ligurio coaxes the friar into murder, so too does *Mandragola* seduce its audience inch by inch into "terrible" and "unfamiliar" things. The play begins with a long exposition of the young lover's character, confirming that he is an industrious individual who is "generous to all [*giovando a ciascuno*]." Only now, when the audience has been fully assured of the lover's virtue, does the play reveal that the object of his lust is already married. This would no doubt have alarmed a few of the more prudish spectators, but the play hastily assures them that the young lover's plot is harmless enough: by tricking the wife's jealous husband into bringing her to the baths, he will give himself the chance to profess his love and see how things shake out. For the better part of two acts, the play continues to maintain this tame expectation, until, suddenly, it changes course. At the same moment that Nicia learns that he must turn his bed over to another man, the audience members also discover that they are about to witness an unprecedented act of sexual fraud. And so alongside Nicia, they are pressed to make a decision. Will they go along with this change of direction? Will they consent to this strange and terrible new scheme?

Like the friar, the wiser members of the audience will recognize that they have been the victims of a bait and switch. But like him, too, they will also realize that they have plenty to gain by going ahead. After all, their desire for the enjoyment of a happy ending has not changed. This is what got them

into the plot in the first place, and now they are simply being asked to measure their commitment to it. The playwright may have manipulated them by implying that satisfaction was closer and easier than it actually was. But he did not manufacture their original thirst for pleasure, and so just as he did not have to twist their arm to attend the play, he does not need to compel them to continue watching now. If they get up and leave, that is that. Machiavelli has misjudged their investment in the play's success. But if they stay, they admit that, like the friar, their ultimate desire is to see the plot "to the end." Remaining in their seats, they join with Nicia and the other duped conspirators in accepting that what once seemed strange is, after all, agreeable.

Machiavelli's two innovations in *La Mandragola* were thus to identify *impetuoso* as a trick for dispossessing masters and to rope his own lords, the audience, into falling for it. And while his play did not enjoy a long performance history outside of Italy, both innovations were spread by a more circulated work: *The Prince*. In this self-advertised guide for seizing power, the con gets underway in the penultimate chapter, where Machiavelli muses that many men have been led by Italy's recent miseries to believe that the world is governed entirely by chance. In response to this depressing view of human agency, the author declares, "Still, so that [*perché*] our free will is not [*non sia*] extinguished, I believe it's possible that fortune wills only half of our actions, leaving roughly half to us."[66] By using "perché" and the subjunctive tense, Machiavelli wraps his rebuttal of determinism in a *proposizioni finali,* or purpose clause. Instead of offering a philosophical proof for human freedom, that is, he rests its existence on his own desire to preserve it. This is hardly an airtight defense of free will, yet as characters such as Pseudolus and Ligurio have demonstrated, it is enough to launch a successful comic plot. The key to such a plot, after all, is not a complete grasp of Fortune. It is an impulsive decision to press ahead, to convince oneself that there is a way before the way is found. Such impetuous behavior is what allows the slaves of comedy to shake off their impotence and seduce their masters, and Machiavelli's commitment to human agency in *The Prince* accomplishes the same. Grabbing the attention of its lordly readers, it raises their hope of getting what they want.

In comedies, this wishful thinking prompts the slave to rush into a half-formed plan, and in *The Prince,* Machiavelli once again follows suit. After admitting that he will settle for controlling "half [*metà*]" of his own actions, he then announces, "I believe that the successful man matches his behavior to the nature of the times."[67] Like the initial schemes proposed by Pseudolus

and Ligurio, this plan seems promising enough, and were Machiavelli's ambition simply to write a plausible guide to success, he could no doubt have cherry-picked some anecdotal data to support it. Instead, however, he behaves like a comic slave, plunging confidently into his plan, only to find that it has propelled him into an unexpected problem: the historical example of Julius the Second. Although Julius achieved wealth and glory through impetuosity (*impetuosa*),[68] his achievements fill Machiavelli with a sudden doubt: "If times had come which demanded that he act with caution, his ruin would have followed."[69] Julius, that is, appears simply to have lucked into a fortunate context, so that far from justifying Machiavelli's defense of free will, he seems to confirm that we are all just puppets of the fates. And indeed, the more that Machiavelli dwells on Julius's life story, the more convinced he becomes that men are obstinate in their ways (*loro modi ostinati*), making it impossible for anyone to adapt to the ever-changing (*variando*) tides of life. Having been undertaken in full confidence, Machiavelli's project for seizing the initiative from almighty Fortune now seems in danger of collapsing.

Just like in comedy, however, what seems an instance of poor plotting is in fact a moment of rhetorical opportunity. As we have seen, although the slaves and servants of comedy frequently find their prospects overwhelmed by Fortune, they are saved from total ruin by two things: first, a renewed commitment to the boldness that got the plot started initially, and second, the collaboration of others. Machiavelli's identical hopes for his own plan are revealed in the chapter's closing moments, when he shakes off his gloom to counsel, "It's always better to be impetuous—fortune is a woman, so you must grab her by the hair."[70] The crudeness of this advice has surprised generations of readers, many of whom have felt it to reek of desperation—as Machiavelli's argument collapses around him, he resorts to brute force to get his way. To see this as a moment of failure, however, is a mistake. Certainly, Machiavelli has reached the limit of his own powers. He has no more tricks up his sleeve, nothing to rescue his narrative of success from the difficulties it has encountered. Yet the fervency of his tone is well suited to stirring up an alternate source of aid. In place of the subjunctive, the author now provokes with an imperative. And in place of his earlier calm purpose clause, he offers a violent hair-grabbing image with a famous comic pedigree: in Terence's *Eunuchus,* a play that Machiavelli diligently copied out by hand, a young man makes an "impetuous [*audax*]" assault on the object of his desire by dragging her by her "locks [*capillo*]."[71] With these rhetorical escalations, the author of *The Prince* forces the issue. Like a comic slave who challenges his startled coconspirators

to join him in dashing ahead, he demands that his audience either reject him as imbalanced or accept his half-baked conviction as their own.

Machiavelli is confident forcing this choice because he believes that he has already stacked the deck in his favor. Having begun the chapter by promising his audience a means to master Fortune, he has raised their hopes. A workable plan is on its way; they need only embrace it to triumph. When this plan encounters difficulties, Machiavelli thus bets that his audience—like Nicia after he has been promised the doctor's cure, or the priest after he has seen the glitter of Ligurio's gold—will have developed a strong enough anticipation of success that they will be reluctant to turn back now. Instead of surrendering to Fortune, they will search for a way to realize their original aspirations, staving off the chapter's plunge into fatalism with their own desire to make it work. Machiavelli, in short, treats his audience the same way he does in *La Mandragola.* After dangling satisfaction before their eyes, he thrusts them into a situation that challenges them to take active responsibility for success themselves. What seems a stream-of-consciousness blundering into hasty hopes and unexpected problems turns out to be a narrative designed to make impetuous collaborators out of its audience.

For ensnaring his readers like this, Machiavelli can seem guilty of an abuse of power, a suspicion fed by the grotesque misogyny of his advice to drag Fortune by her scalp. Just as in *La Mandragola,* that is, Machiavelli tries to skunk his audience into launching a sexual assault. As the surprising enfranchisements of Lucrezia and the mother-in-law reveal, however, such apparently reactionary mob-bait can generate progressive outcomes, and the manipulations of *The Prince* have their own liberating purpose. Because the author of the treatise is unable to complete the narrative himself, he cedes his authority (like Pseudolus and Volpino before him) to the hands that carry forth his plan. In the immediate, of course, this empowers the princely reader, but on the logic of *impetuoso,* the diffusion of authority does not end here. As Machiavelli notes in the first book of the *Discorsi,* the most glorious and successful state of all, the Roman Republic, came about through an unexpected comic twist.[72] Because the Roman kings boldly pursued a larger empire, they were forced to arm their subjects, giving these subjects a taste of the independence that would transform Rome from a kingdom into a republic.[73] Like the plotters of *La Cassaria* and *La Mandragola* the Roman kings therefore found their daring leading to populism, as a regal overreaching for glory set off a chain reaction that empowered a hundred thousand citizen-soldiers. When Machiavelli urges the kingly reader of *The Prince* to charge forward in the

same way, he is thus not imagining that the result will be a permanent princedom. Instead, he is envisioning an impetuous lunge for the heights that triggers a mudslide into democracy.

To read *The Prince* this way is, to be sure, to depart rather dramatically from the way it is ordinarily read. Machiavelli is generally appreciated today as a political theorist, and although there is (and has always been) a great deal of disagreement over exactly what theories Machiavelli is espousing, the belief that he is somehow trying to enlighten his readers goes back through the Founding Fathers to the sixteenth century.[74] Even when Machiavelli has been seen as a less prescriptive thinker, someone more interested in raising questions than installing answers, he has been celebrated for honing his readers' powers of rational critique.[75] And even when he has been associated with less elite, more radical, styles of populism, he has been praised for handing his readers a "manual of institution building."[76] While history is full of different Machiavellis—the devil, the tyrant maker, the skeptical iconoclast, the classical republican, the democratic innovator—they are thus typically Machiavellis that appeal to our intelligence (or at least, to our political cunning).

This approach to reading Machiavelli has been enormously fruitful, but as I have been trying to show, there is an additional way of reading *The Prince*. Instead of treating it as an invitation to free thinking, we can embrace it as a comedy or, in other words, as an apparently disposable form of entertainment that operates on our subrational parts. Seen as such a work, *The Prince* is not attempting to encourage cerebral activity. Rather, it is deploying various dramatic and narrative techniques to sway our physical behaviors. And indeed, far from getting us to think deeply, *The Prince* is invested in having us think very little, and badly at that. For the deeper and more critically we reflect, the less likely we are to rush impetuously into destroying authority.

By emphasizing the bodily effects of *The Prince,* of course, this alternative way of reading not only departs from the dominant way of interpreting Machiavelli but potentially alarms it. If we take the more modern view of democracy as a (generally) enlightened and (fundamentally) self-determining form of government, then we cannot but be concerned by a mode of reading that tricks us into barreling ahead. Not only is this outcome thoughtless, but it appears the naked antithesis of free choice. From the perspective of the more practical form of democracy encouraged by ancient comedy, however, there is a straightforward response to such concerns: Machiavelli's method may not be ideal, but it qualifies as the better of two imperfect choices. While it might be preferable to live in a world where human behavior is rooted in rational

choice, the old rhetoricians pragmatically observed (and philosophers like Plato agreed) that emotion plays a heavy role in the public's decision making.[77] Given this materialist view of political causation (which has been upheld in our own time by a wide range of empirical research into democracy),[78] the proponents of popular rule have an unwelcome decision to make: limit themselves to promoting an independence of thought that has less muscle to generate a free society or take advantage of the rhetorical power of *impetuoso* to hoodwink people into forming a more equal government. Democratic reformers like Machiavelli must, that is, decide between means and ends, and in a pragmatic ethics, the choice is an inevitable one: ends. Better to be like the slaves of Roman comedy and discover liberty by being disempowered.

Even if we swallow our critical objections to this fleshly line of thinking, however, my reading of *The Prince* seems doomed by a practical concern. The real test of pragmatism is whether it works, and I appear to have grandly flunked *The Prince* by conceding that I am reading it so eccentrically. While the odd scholar has broached the possibility that *The Prince* is a rhetorical trap designed to dupe princes into acting foolishly,[79] no one has ever claimed it as an attempt to promote democracy by encouraging us *all* to act like fools. There is, in effect, no record of anyone in history reading *The Prince* the way that I have read it, a fact that would seem to demolish my claim for its practical efficacy. If Machiavelli plotted his treatise to work as I have proposed, well, then he stumbled badly, because it did not work at all. As I have noted, however, one of the features of a comic mode of reading is that it does not need to be consciously acknowledged by its audience. It can change people's physical behavior without them ever recognizing or recording it, and as evidence that this is what *The Prince* did, I will briefly track the historical influence of its comic *impetuoso*. Because *The Prince* had an extensive readership—translated widely into the vernacular, its pages were turned by Milton, Montesquieu, Jefferson, and thousands more—there are many potential ways in which this influence might be traced. But in the spirit of comedy, I will dash into one spectacular example: Thomas Paine's Machiavellian seduction of America's Second Continental Congress.

Like Machiavelli, Paine spent most of his life as an outcast from power. His radically anti-authoritarian habits of mind led John Adams to sneer that he had "a better hand at tearing down than at building," and he was not included as a member of the Continental Congresses or the Constitutional Convention. Yet even though Paine was not himself one of the Founding Fathers, it was his act of razing in *Common Sense* (1776) that cleared the space in which

they would earn their name.[80] Embraced with wild enthusiasm by the American public,[81] *Common Sense* helped tip the colonies—who up till then had done no more than saber rattle—into open war. Paine's treatise did so, moreover, by being frankly impetuous. As Adams moaned, *Common Sense* was a singularly headstrong affair, "without any restraint or even an Attempt at any Equilibrium or Counterpoise."[82]

By urging the American public to rush right in, Paine was not accidentally following Machiavelli's steps. He was stepping directly in their footprints. Though Paine makes no reference to *The Prince* in *Common Sense,*[83] he quotes one of Machiavelli's Italian acolytes, Giacinto Dragonetti.[84] In Paine's words, "I offer . . . the following extracts from that wise observer on governments DRAGONETTI. 'The science' says he 'of the politician consists in fixing the true point of happiness and freedom. Those men would deserve the gratitude of ages, who should discover a mode of government that contained the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expense.' "[85] This definition of good government as the most cost-effective way of maximizing popular happiness is lifted straight from Machiavelli, and Dragonetti's treatise then goes on to offer a crash course in *impetuoso*. Arguing that our natural guides to "happiness" are the "individual . . . passions" that constitute the "common sense" of the body politic, Dragonetti suggests that the way to empower this common sense is by encouraging *audacia* (or, in the English translation available to Paine, "daring").[86] Such daring, the Italian argues, is the foundation of public virtue—"The word *virtue* is Roman, and gives the idea of a bold effort"—and to encourage citizens to take this "Brave . . . plunge" (21), he recommends that governments develop an artificial system of "rewards" that compels daring in the otherwise reluctant.[87] Dragonetti, in short, styles good government as a large-scale version of Ligurio's bait and switch, suggesting that popular virtue is generated when the people are launched into boldness by the dangling of fabricated satisfactions.

Dragonetti's Machiavellian strategy for encouraging popular rule was not lost on Paine, who begins *Common Sense* by embracing its radically empiricist justification for democracy: "There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required. The state of a king shuts him from the world, yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly."[88] Here, Paine reiterates the opening gambit of *The Prince,* noting that kings are wholly lacking in worldly experience. Instead, it is the people who possess the most "information" about life,

and so it is their "common sense" that should rule the body politic. In keeping with the street logic that Machiavelli had learned from comedy, moreover, Paine's strategy for nurturing this practical populism is to manufacture boldness through sleight of hand. Just as *La Mandragola* conceals the unpleasant aspects of its plot until the third act, *Common Sense* never mentions the difficult work of "independence" during its first two parts. It is only well into its third part, after it has repeatedly encouraged its readers to imagine their own "HAPPINESS," that it reveals the hard requirement for success: a war of "separation and independence."

Like the abruptly disclosed kidnapping-murder of *La Mandragola,* this bloody task would not have been an easy one for readers to take in stride, no matter how eagerly they were rushing ahead. But to help them hurdle it, Paine follows Ligurio and the slaves of comedy in laying out a half-finished plot for success: "If there is any true cause of fear respecting independence, it is because no plan is yet laid down. Men do not see their way out—Wherefore, as an opening into that business, I offer the following . . . " (33). Paine thus quiets his readers' fears by intimating that he has a "plan" for victory, and yet after whetting their hopes, he admits a few pages later that no plan is actually forthcoming: "I only presume to offer hints, not plans" (46). Adopting the method of Volpino's weed-strewn plot or *The Prince*'s man-handling of Fortune, Paine's essay has once again set its readers running forward in anticipation, only to reveal that they must find their way themselves. And to give them one more Machiavellian encouragement to do so, *Common Sense* then ends with a final sentence right out of *La Mandragola*: "These proceedings may at first appear strange and difficult; but, like all other steps which we have already passed over, will in a little time become familiar and agreeable" (49). Here is the very same sentiment—indeed, the identical terms—used to describe Ligurio's bait and switch. Things that seem "strange [*strane*]" and "difficult [*insopportabili*]" from a distance will appear "familiar [*dimestiche*]" once we have bent our steps toward them.[89]

As in *La Mandragola,* this sleight of hand succeeded. George Washington observed *Common Sense* "working a powerful change in the minds of many" of the delegates at the Second Continental Congress, inspiring them to vote for independence.[90] Having captured the imagination of the general public, that is, Paine's treatise helped lure America's wealthy leaders into declaring war, and in a grand staging of the plot of Machiavelli's play, the result of the Continental Congress's daring act was an unintentional enlargement of popular authority. Although many of the congressional delegates were deeply

opposed to giving political power to anyone outside their own propertied class, they soon discovered that they could not fight a war alone. They needed an army of helpers, and so, like the Roman kings before them, they found their impetuous militancy making them suddenly dependent on popular militias.[91] As historians have noted, moreover, these militias were composed of far more than middle-class landowners and merchants. They also included "Indians, free Negroes and mulattoes, white servants and apprentices."[92] By affording these social outsiders "full citizenship in the community,"[93] the rashness of Paine's tract thus did more than entice the unsuspecting Nicias of the Continental Congress to rush into a war that exposed their *impotenzias.* Just as Machiavelli predicted, it also led to an expansion of what constituted a citizen, enabling the poor and foreign to claim seats in the new government. Through *impetuoso,* the America originally imagined by the congressional delegates as an oligarchic republic had become infused with elements of a broader-based *demokratia.*

As we look back on these events, we can see that they did not produce an ideal democracy. America remained a highly stratified country in which the majority of the population was denied equal (or any) political participation. Nor was impetuous revolution a sustainable strategy for the future. It may have knocked the powerful down a peg, but it laid waste to many valuable things too, and unlike in Machiavellian comedy, the citizens it empowered were almost exclusively male.[94] From the pragmatic perspective of *demokratia,* however, such problems do not mean that the bold populism of *Pseudolus, La Mandragola,* and *Common Sense* needs to be discarded. Instead, they invite us to continue problem solving,[95] and in chapter 3, I will explore an old comic method for addressing some of the practical concerns left in the wake of the street revolutions of *impetuoso*. Identified by ancient and early modern rhetoricians as a way to encourage three habits of successful governments, this comic method led to a model of public education that not only chipped away further at the power of the mighty but provided the people with some tools to rule themselves.

The *Virtù* of Imitation

In the wake of the Second World War, the defenders of democracy found a surprising new ally in Shakespeare's *Henry 5*.[1] For generations, the play had seemed just the opposite: a piece of nationalistic jingoism about a warrior-king who revenged 1066 with an invasion of France.[2] Yet when the defeat of Axis fascism resulted in the dropping of the Iron Curtain and the déjà-vu emergence of another oddly mustached global villain, the scholars of Western Europe and America came to feel that they had mistaken Shakespeare's intention.[3] The playwright, they now realized, had held up Henry not to celebrate him but to warn the world about Supreme Soviets, thousand-year Führers, and other despotic cults of personality. Like the tyrant king of Shakespeare's earlier *Richard III,* Henry was a cynical manipulator who feigned love for the people he murdered, swore oaths on a Bible he never believed, and achieved his throne through the kind of mass deception that had led Plato to brand theater as a social menace. Indeed, the only difference between Henry and Richard was that Shakespeare had chosen not to pull the demagogue's mask aside. Instead, as the theater pit roared in approval at the young king's *virtù,* Shakespeare winked at the few audience members who were wise enough to see the lurking Machiavel. This, the playwright whispered, was the horror of true power. Not the carnival evil of Richard, but the lie that dressed itself in public hopes, tricking the masses to trade reason for submission.

The appeal of this postwar interpretation of Henry went well beyond the liberal temper of the times. It tapped into a utopian spirit that had shaped democratic readings of Shakespeare's play for the previous two hundred years. In the age of Jefferson, it had become traditional for performances of *Henry 5* to purge the young king's threats to leave "naked infants spitted on pikes,"[4] and by the early nineteenth century, Romantic readers of Shakespeare

had started to suspect that England's greatest king was perhaps not very good. As Hazlitt remarked in 1817, "he seemed to have no idea of any rule of right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy."[5] By the dawn of the twentieth century, the occasional scholar had then begun to feel that this distaste for princely pragmatism must have been shared by the playwright himself. Writing in 1919, after nationalism had shattered against itself in the Great War, Gerald Gould declared, "None of Shakespeare's plays is so persistently and thoroughly misunderstood as *Henry V . . . The play is ironic.*"[6] During the Cold War, this interpretation of *Henry 5* rose to a critical orthodoxy,[7] and over the past twenty years, it has emerged as the basis for a sophisticated series of readings that encourage the democratic critique of power.[8] Occasionally, there has been a doubtful voice, the scholar who wonders whether Shakespeare may himself have been more the self-serving propagandist than the subversive ironist.[9] But even this dissent has only helped reinforce the underlying premise of the new interpretation: that Henry's pragmatic *virtù* is an instrument of tyranny. Whether modern scholars have critiqued *Henry 5* or praised its ironies, they have thus broadly agreed that Henry's deceptions are a negative example, the antithesis of democracy.[10]

As I will suggest over the following pages, however, an emphasis on the comic portions of the play provides an entirely different (in fact, fundamentally opposite) way of accessing the play's democratic potential.[11] Rather than critiquing Henry's pragmatism, audiences can imitate it, so that instead of pulling down the crown, they empower themselves by becoming kings. To illustrate this other route to popular power, I will trace the debt of *Henry 5* to the ancient and early modern tradition of rhetoric that we began exploring in chapters 1 and 2. Drilled into schoolboys from Machiavelli to Shakespeare, this tradition promoted the imitation of comedy as a way to develop three key skills of practical governance, and it is here, I will suggest, that *Henry 5* establishes itself as a guide for democratic citizens. When Shakespeare's Henry is aided to the throne by the political skills he gains from copying Falstaff's antics, he not only illustrates the real-world worth of comic imitation but offers an example of power taking for his low-born audience to copy. And, as I will show, many of them did. Generations of spectators, from the opening crowds of the Globe to the first president of the United States, imitated Henry's upwardly mobile *virtù,* taking the tyrant prince not as a warning about demagoguery but as a comic model of democracy.

1 Henry 4, 2 Henry 4, and *Henry 5*—a trilogy I will refer to collectively as the *Henriad*—are filled with broils and insurrections, but the real crisis at

their center is the question of how a man makes himself king. Henry's father, Henry 4, was not born to the throne, and so although he physically snatches the crown from its former possessor, he cannot claim to be monarch by law or god. He therefore tries to secure his legitimacy in a number of other ways—from launching a crusade to publically referring to his own "majesty"[12]—yet the problem is still with him on his deathbed. No sooner has the king sighed in relief that his son is a true-born regent—"for thou the garland wear'st successively"—than he neurotically advises the prince to *really* secure the throne by instigating a foreign war (*2H4,* 4.5.201). His anxieties are not assuaged by his son's blasé response. Instead of solving the riddle of the crown, the younger Henry simply asserts: "You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me; / Then plain and right must my possession be" (*2H4,* 4.5.221–20). The rhythmic force of this couplet gives it the ring of authority, but beneath its confident beat is nothing more than a tautology: as long as we possess royal power, then it is ours. The crucial question of *how* someone becomes king is breezily ignored.

Nevertheless, as the early portions of *1 Henry 4* make clear, this question is one that the prince has thought long and hard about. In the midst of the drunken antics of the play's third scene, he peels back his Eastcheap hood to assure the audience that his mindless vice binge is all an act. By covering himself with the "base contagious clouds" of Falstaff and his gang, he declares, he will "imitate the sun," which seems to shine the brighter when the fog has cleared (*1H4,* 1.3.194). Henry, in other words, is plotting to make himself seem a better king by setting himself off with the bad and the worse, a plan that has suggested to many recent scholars that the would-be monarch is primarily engaged in fraud. As Stephen Greenblatt argues, "Hal's . . . value, a value not intrinsic but contingent, depend[s] upon the circulation of counterfeit coin."[13] This modern scholarly interpretation of "imitate the sun" sits uneasily, however, with two historical features of the play. First, the prince hardly needs to *try* to appear counterfeit. He is already bad currency, for he has been minted by a false king. Second, while political idealists from Plato onward have worried that there is something inauthentic about copying, the term "imitate" did not, at the time Shakespeare was writing, typically carry a negative implication. Indeed, quite the opposite: it had long been respected as a practical means for training heads of state. From the twelfth century on, many European monarchs were prepared for their duties with *specula principum*—"mirrors for princes"—that offered examples of good behavior to copy.[14] Then, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this tradition was enriched by the revival of an ancient rhetorical practice known as *imitatio*

that provided specific techniques for developing *virtus* (a term that literally meant "virtue," it usually carried the more worldly connotation of "practical excellence").[15]

Because *imitatio* originated in antiquity as a method for training orators, its examples of *virtus* were generally culled from literary sources.[16] Out of all such sources, moreover, the classroom teachers of imitation focused on one genre in particular: comedy. As Quintilian remarked, "a diligent reading of Menander's comedies would, I believe, be enough to master *imitatio*."[17] By the sixteenth century, Menander's works had largely disappeared, but Erasmus filled the void with other ancient comedies, urging his students to imitate Terence and Plautus.[18] Machiavelli, meanwhile, shamelessly promoted his own comedy by claiming that the "young" could "profit" from its library of public mores: "the cunning of the servant, the gluttony of the parasite, the misery of the poor, the ambition of the rich, the allure of the harlot."[19] For those youthful spirits who had not learned the *virtù* of ordinary life, the comic stage could be their window to the street.

In the *Henriad,* Henry discovers just such a practical education in comedy. He has barely been on stage before he begins to parrot Falstaff's comic style:

> *Falstaff:* 'Sblood, I am as melancholy as a gib cat, or a lugged bear.
> *Henry:* Or an old lion, or a lover's lute. (*1H4,* 1.2.73–74)

Falstaff quickly breaks off this exchange, complaining about the prince's "damnable iteration" (1.2.90), but what the old knight sees as an idle pastime is for Henry an important learning experience. As the ancient teachers of rhetoric noted, "iteration" was a starting point for *imitatio*: "in the same way that chewing helps us digest our food, we must soften and prepare our reading material for imitation through frequent iteration [*iteratione*]."[20] The prince's immediate purpose for chewing on the old knight's example is to learn how to blend in better with the sun-covering Eastcheap gang, but whether by intention or accident (and as we will see, fortunate accidents play an important role in *imitatio*), Henry also finds a deeper education in it. For through his iterations of Falstaff, the prince comes to learn three comic practices that the old schoolmasters saw as the foundation of successful orators—and so successful rulers. First, an investment in pluralism. Second, a focus on outcomes. And third, a willingness to exploit lucky mistakes.

The first of these practices was summed up in 1548 by the Italian grammarian Francesco Robortello, who remarked that the "diverse" characters of comedy presented "goodness . . . in several kinds."[21] Comedy, in other words,

showed that people could be good in different ways, leading sixteenth-century educators to embrace the practical value of pluralism: "The more models we have and the less likeness there is between them, the greater is the progress of eloquence."[22] By learning a range of different models, from the lofty to the lowly, young orators could express themselves effectively in a range of situations, and this oratorical diversity naturally opened the door to a deeper behavioral one. In the words of Cicero, "There are two ways to win a contest—first, by debate; second, by force—but since the first way is appropriate for men and the second for beasts, we should resort to force only when debate is not an option."[23] Or as Machiavelli would provocatively rephrase Cicero in *The Prince,* "There are two ways to fight, by law and by force; the first is for men, the second for animals; and so when the law fails, you need to be a beast."[24] Machiavelli makes clear, moreover, that this demolition of a fixed standard of human conduct opens an ever-widening stream of possibilities, for after all, there are multiple kinds of beast: "Since it's necessary for a prince to act like an animal, he should act like a fox and a lion; because the lion is helpless against snares and the fox is helpless against wolves."[25] With this blunt advice, Machiavelli articulates the logical end of taking the practical diversity of comedy as a guide.[26] To reach the heights of governance, a man must copy many low things.

Henry learns this same lesson through his iterations of Falstaff. The old knight, as befits his comic style, is a committed pluralist. Accused of being a wastrel by the Chief Justice, he impishly declares, "You that are old / consider not the capacities of us that are young" (*2H4,* 1.2.174–75). On the surface, this seems a ludicrous defense, and the Chief Justice froths in response, "Is not . . . every part about you blasted with antiquity?" (*2H4,* 1.2.182–84). Yet Falstaff's declaration neatly captures the logic of comic *imitatio*. Where the Chief Justice sees the giddiness of youth as something to be reformed into the gravity of age, Falstaff recognizes that the young, too, have their particular "capacities," and by imitating the virtues of youth, he provides a comic complement to the schoolroom practice of encouraging boys to copy old men. From a pedagogical perspective, after all, the value of comedy was its ability to teach the student to be all the things that he naturally was not. That the old knight is acting other than himself is thus evidence not of the moral failure of comedy but of its utility, and Falstaff takes full advantage of this utility by repeatedly switching between different comic roles. When he wants his gang to follow him, he takes a lordly tone: "Bardolph, get thee before to Coventry; fill me a bottle of sack." (*1H4,* 4.2.1–2). When he is caught by Henry in a lie,

he plays the trusty servant: "Why, hear you, my masters, was it for me to kill the heir-apparent?" (*1H4,* 2.4.268–9). When he wants the prince's sympathy, he bares his grey hairs: "Valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is old" (*1H4,* 2.4.476–8). When he wants to be the prince's boon companion, he sings a tune of lust: "Let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the mood . . . is not my hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench?" (*1H4,* 1.2.25–26, 39–40). Falstaff, in short, contains all the classic male parts of ancient comedy: the noble, the lackey, the senex, and the dandy.[27]

This Falstaffian diversity forms the deeper basis for Henry's development into a king. Like the old knight, Henry finds that he must take on multiple roles, for to make good on his plot to imitate the breaking sun, he must copy both the luminous body and its covering mists. He must, that is, play both high and low, and in practical terms, this means that he is required to mimic not just the cloud-gang of Eastcheap but also the man publically referred to as the "sun"—the current king, his father.[28] Within the *Henriad,* the prince's first prompt to undertake this second imitation is another of Falstaff's comic turns. Staging what he claims will be an instructional scene, Falstaff grabs a few tavern props and sets about impersonating the king: "This chair shall be my state, this dagger my scepter, and this cushion my crown" (*1H4,* 2.4.378–79). With a pillow perched upon his head, Falstaff instantly makes himself ridiculous, and yet his performance does not devolve into sheer buffoonery, for like the old knight's other imitations, this one succeeds by capturing the mannerisms of its object. Scowling gravely, Falstaff drops a phrase that mingles the king's displeasure with his iambs—"I do not only marvel where thou spends thy time, but also how thou art accompanied"—before building to a crescendo thick with the elder Henry's self-pity and labored repetitions: "I do not speak to thee in drink, but in tears; not in pleasure, but in passion; not in words only, but in woes also."[29] The humor of this imitation springs from its fidelity, and even the climactic piece of parody—"not in words only, but in woes also"—works to elicit a pang of sympathy. For behind the risible clumsiness of the formulation—the chiming long vowels of "woes also" tipping the whole into bathos—there is a genuine portrait of a father distressed.

In keeping with the tolerant pluralism of comedy, Falstaff's imitation thus makes the king seem amusing but not wholly contemptible, bringing him down to earth without burying his example beneath it. And its result is to elicit a similar comic *imitatio* from Henry: "Dost thou speak like a king? Do thou stand for me, and I'll play my father" (*1H4,* 2.4.433–44). Partly, Henry

takes over the stage to redeem his father from the old knight's burlesque. Yet the prince's own imitation also depends on the leveling spirit of clowning, for he begins not by casting away Falstaff's comic props but by announcing, "Well, here I am set," and plumping himself down on the mock throne (*1H4,* 2.4.438).

How far Henry succeeds in his tavern imitation is debatable. He is, after all, still learning to play the part of a king, and in place of his father's blunt pentameter, the young prince delivers rhetorical questions in prose. What is clear, however, is that Falstaff's example has prompted the prince to *try* to copy his father, and a few scenes later, we glimpse some fruits of this endeavor. Having been summoned to court by his father, the young prince is treated to a harangue in which the elder Henry describes how he himself claimed the throne: "By being seldom seen, I could not stir / But, like a comet, I was wondered at" (*1H4,* 3.2.46–47). The elder Henry intends this as a rebuke. Upset by his son's slumming ways, he wants to provide him with a better example of royal behavior: a comet that hides itself from view. As the preceding events of the play have made clear, however, the younger Henry is already following this example, for by planning to "imitate the sun," he is continuing his father's legacy of mimicking a heavenly object that blazes out from shade. Rather than brushing off his father's paternalistic sermon, Henry thus reassures him, "I am your son" (*1H4,* 3.2.134). This declaration quiets the king, and it would have been no less satisfying to the old teachers of rhetoric. Just as they advised, Henry has patterned himself after multiple models, ascending toward the throne by copying both the Eastcheap "minions of the moon" and his father's comet shine (*1H4,* 1.2.26).

At the same time that Henry acquires this practical diversity, he also learns a second practice that the pedagogues associated with comedy: a focus on effects. As ancient and early modern teachers of rhetoric never tired of reminding their students, *imitatio* was not meant to be literal. In a constantly changing world, exact repetition was dangerously conservative, and so rather than parroting the "form" of previous behaviors, students were urged to copy their "effects."[30] As Quintilian insists, "imitation (as I will now say again) is not simply of words . . . You must keep in mind . . . that everything in a successful speech . . . is written with the end goal of winning."[31] Or, as Vives put it fifteen hundred years later, "Supposing someone intending to thank a certain person were to repeat the same speech as Cicero . . . he would be stealing; but it would be imitation if he were to consider what *effect* the author aimed at producing."[32] This emphasis on effects made imitation a dynamic process—

having guessed at the original's intent, the student then had to adapt it to a new situation—and many sixteenth-century pedagogues therefore claimed that "Imitation . . . amounted both to a principle of progress and an agent of change."[33] As Francis Bacon ambitiously enthused, "But if anyone were . . . to imitate [*imitetur*] the sun . . . he would soon . . . equal or perhaps sometimes surpass its effect."[34]

Henry's own plan to imitate the sun has just this surpassing result. He gets his first taste of the practical benefits of effects-based *imitatio* through his iterations of Falstaff:

> *Falstaff*: Yeah, or the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe.
> *Henry:* What sayest thou to a hare, or the melancholy of Moor-ditch?
> (*1H4,* 1.2.75–76)

Here, Henry is not slavishly copying Falstaff (if he were, he would have done no more than intone, "the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe"). Instead, like a sixteenth-century schoolboy varying Terence's rhetorical tropes, Henry rewrites the form of Falstaff's similes to extend their effect of "melancholy." At first, the old knight encourages Henry's similes, answering them with comparisons of his own, but when Henry's inventiveness shows no sign of flagging, Falstaff abruptly halts the exercise: "Hal, I prithee trouble me no more with vanity" (*1H4,* 1.2.81–82). Falstaff's claim here is that Henry is wasting everyone's time, but the context suggests that the old knight's concern is precisely the reverse: Henry is being rather too successful for his teacher's liking. Instead of reflecting Falstaff's image back, he is on the verge of outdoing it, and since the old knight is unwilling to participate in his own obsolescence, he shutters up the school. Henry, however, has already learned too much to be held back, and it is not long before he comes up with another way to better his model. After Falstaff robs a pair of travelers in the night, Henry turns to Poins and remarks, "Now could thou and I rob the thieves and go merrily to London, it would be . . . a good jest forever" (*1H4,* 2.2.93–96). Henry, that is, imitates Falstaff's theft by now robbing the old knight himself, so that, as Bacon foretells, the student quite literally outstrips his master.

This same usurping dynamic holds for Henry's imitation of his father. Although the elder Henry's claim that he mimicked a comet to be "wond'red at" (*1H4,* 3.2.47) seems to be repeated verbatim in his son's assertion that he has imitated the sun to be "more wond'red at" (*1H4,* 1.2.201), the younger Henry slips in the word "more." With this added term, the prince quietly reveals the opportunity afforded by the *imitatio* of effects: the potential to not only equal

his model but exceed it. And as his father's baffled response to Henry's Eastcheap slumming demonstrates, this is exactly what occurs. Failing to perceive that his son's association with Falstaff is an imitation of his own comet method, the elder king reveals how far the imitation has advanced beyond its original form. By abandoning the literal shape of his father's strategy to instead copy its physical effect, Henry has innovated this strategy to the point that its own inventor can no longer recognize it.

The third and final lesson that Henry learns from comedy is to treat mistakes as opportunities. At their core, the plots of ancient comedies were attempts to turn bad luck to good, and the old schoolteachers urged their students to follow this example by taking advantage of the apparently unfortunate errors that they made in their classroom imitations: "since there's nothing harder than producing an exact replica, it's easier to innovate accidentally than to repeat perfectly."[35] One of the tricks to learning was thus to recognize that accidents could be useful, a lesson illustrated vividly by Falstaff. After being robbed in the night, the old knight tries to cover his humiliation by telling the prince that he was overwhelmed by a vast number of thieves. Henry immediately pounces, revealing that he himself was the robber: "you carried your guts away as nimbly, with as quick dexterity, and roar'd for mercy, and still run and roar'd, as ever I heard bull-calf" (*1H4,* 2.4.258–61). Falstaff, it seems, has gaffed—in trying to ease his embarrassment, he has compounded it. Yet no sooner is his error revealed than he discovers a way to spin it into gold: "Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules; but beware instinct—the lion will not touch the true prince" (*1H4,* 2.4.270–2). With a hidden twinkle in his eye, Falstaff declares that his apparently craven behavior is the sign of a loyal "instinct" not to harm his liege. Just like Pseudolus and the slaves of ancient comedy, the old knight has seized on failure as a chance to prove his virtue.

Off this example, Henry follows suit. Two acts later, he is caught making an even worse mistake than Falstaff. Visiting his father's deathbed, Henry helps himself to the crown, only to have his father wake up in righteous indignation: "Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair / That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honors / Before thy hour be ripe?" (*2H4,* 4.5.94–95). Like Falstaff, Henry has been caught red-handed in an ignominious act. And just like Falstaff, Henry responds not by admitting fault but by turning his error to advantage. Ostentatiously blaming the crown for his father's ill health—"thou . . . Hast eat thy bearer up" (*2H4,* 4.5.164–65)—he insists that he put it on his head "To try with it, as with an enemy / That hath before my face mur-

dered my father" (*2H4,* 4.5.166–67). Imitating Falstaff's trick, Henry deftly twists a sign of self-regard into evidence of loyalty, and in an instant, the king's fury dissipates. Fondly telling his son that he has won "the more thy father's love," he reveals that the prince has gone beyond recovering his footing (*2H4,* 4.5.179). Like the old knight before him, he has used his stumble to succeed "the more."

By incorporating these three comic practices into his plot to become king, Henry offers a different perspective on Machiavellian *virtù* than the one usually connected with Shakespeare's play. Because there is no direct evidence that the playwright read *The Prince,*[36] the *Henriad* has typically been associated with the mainstream account of *virtù* that circulated in sixteenth-century England,[37] an account that overwhelmingly emphasized deceit.[38] As the French lawyer Innocent Gentillet wagged his finger in *Contre-Machiavel* (1576), Machiavelli had developed a "tyrannical science" that showed the way "to deceive, to dissemble, and to be perjured."[39] With this handbook of evil, the Florentine tore away the foundation of morality, reducing Bible oaths to empty breaths and ushering in a brute pragmatism that took earthly achievement as its only standard.[40] What made Machiavelli's calculated cynicism so fearsome, moreover, was that it acknowledged a practical benefit to maintaining a semblance of virtue, prompting its acolytes to make their most profane lies ring with honesty. Such pious mendacity, English Protestants fumed, is what the Catholic Church had oozed when it presented its self-serving fictions as gospel truth,[41] and Christopher Marlowe summoned Machiavel himself on stage to preen that the churchmen who railed openly against him were the very ones using his precepts to "attain / To Peter's chair."[42]

This sixteenth-century tendency to see fraudulence as Machiavelli's core teaching is what has prompted so many recent scholars to perceive Henry as a subtler version of Marlowe's Machiavel. Coolly admitting that he plans to "falsify men's hopes," the young prince seems to embody the Machiavellian strategy of tyrannical deception. As I have been suggesting over the previous pages, however, Shakespeare had access to a more sophisticated understanding of practical *virtù* through his own rhetorical education and early career.[43] In school, he had been drilled in *imitatio,*[44] and in his youthful play, *The Comedy of Errors* (1594), he had followed the old orators' advice by closely imitating an ancient comedy. While penning his other early works, moreover, Shakespeare had made extensive use of the three practices that the pedagogues claimed were the benefit of such comic imitations. He had copied a wide range of genres, from the blunt horrors of Senecan tragedy to the hyper-

literate charm of John Lyly's pastoral pieces; he had adjusted the literal form of English history with the end goal of winning over his audience; and he had incorporated the improvised performances of the Globe clowns into his written scripts. In short, through his own pursuit of worldly success,[45] Shakespeare had discovered the value of pluralism, of focusing on outcomes, and of fortunate accidents, converging on the three-fold practice of *imitatio* that underwrote Machiavellian *virtù*.

Whether or not the Englishman ever studied the Florentine, he was thus able in the *Henriad* to offer a portrait of *virtù* that rejected the deceptions of the stage Machiavel for the more nuanced pragmatism of Machiavelli's politics. From the vantage of this pragmatism, fraud is an occasional, not an essential, ingredient of success, for the only real recipe for *virtù* is to imitate high achievers.[46] When we look at the catalogue of such achievers, we will of course notice that a number had forked tongues, but this does not mean that lies alone made them successful. As Machiavelli notes, there was the emperor Severus, whose deceptions would have failed had it not been for his other conspicuous abilities.[47] Nor does it mean that every successful man is a hypocrite; *The Prince* observes that "the temperate, the just, and the kind" can succeed when the times call for such qualities.[48] From the vantage of *imitatio,* the bedrock of *virtù* is therefore not falsehood. Rather, it is a willingness to copy what has worked in similar situations in the past, and while such willingness may lead us into trickery, it equally well may not. All that matters is that we forget our man-made fictions of good and evil, accepting that the only tried-and-true way to a happy ending is the same adaptable pragmatism modeled in ancient comedy. And such is the comic approach of Shakespeare's Henry. Although his plan to imitate the sun implicates him in a lie, the prince does not (unlike Richard III) see such fraud as the deep spring of worldly success. Instead, it is only when he sets out to copy his father's route to the throne that he discovers that power comes from cloaking one's shine, so that, in true Machiavellian fashion, Henry arrives at deception incidentally.

To read Henry's *virtù* this way is not to see the prince as any less a tyrant than Richard III. In fact, there is something potentially more imperial about his brand of pragmatism. Where Richard collapses from his own emptiness, Henry's appetite for success is unending, driving him to seek conquest as long as he breathes. Yet though Henry may not himself be a force for democracy, I will suggest over the remainder of this chapter that his example has been. While most audiences of *1 Henry 4* and *2 Henry 4* have not found Henry to be their favorite character—early spectators warmed more to Hotspur, and

later ones preferred Falstaff—he is, by the third and final play of the *Henriad,* the only character left to imitate. Indeed, he occupies so much of the stage that nineteenth-century critics came to view *Henry 5* as less a play than a series of excuses for Henry to speechify. Unlike its predecessors, *Henry 5* therefore presses the king's rhetorical example upon its audience, and although most recent scholars have found this a sinister imposition, it is possible to locate something more empowering at its core: an attempt to style Henry as a second Falstaff, that is, as a useful if comically imperfect model.

Unlike Falstaff, the Henry of *Henry 5* is not an obviously comic character. In fact, when he takes umbrage at the Dauphin's practical joke or Williams's wry analysis of the vanities of kings, he seems to be a man who has lost his sense of humor. However, while this Henry does not have the *form* of a comedy, he does have the *effect* of one, for he inspires the same sentiment that led Shakespeare's schoolteachers to claim comedy as a useful source of *imitatio*: reserved admiration. Comedies naturally achieved this effect by portraying the successes of imperfect (indeed, often absurd) individuals. To marvel at the triumph of a cunning parasite or a desperate lover or some other humorous creature was not to wish to become one. Rather, it was to see a limited aspect of their behavior as worthy of imitation, so that admiration never veered into worship but was mingled always with mirth. The old pedagogues believed, moreover, that the same feeling of tempered wonder could be generated by non-comic texts, especially if students were primed beforehand with the ancient lesson of comedy: Nothing, however wonderful it might seem, was flawless.[49] As Quintilian remarked, "Don't be seduced into thinking that everything the best authors say is perfect, because now and then they stumble and fall, or indulge too much in their humour."[50] The imperfections of great authors might not be as noticeable as those of stage clowns, but they were there, reminding students that the path to success lay in the limited admiration that flowed from comic pluralism.

Henry 5 encourages precisely this attitude toward Henry. Its prologue begins by describing its props as "ciphers" to a "great accompt," and it then portrays Henry himself as a similar merging of the makeshift and the marvelous, playing up the young king's great accompts of *imitatio,* while stitching in reminders that practice does not, after all, make perfect. The first of Henry's triumphant uses of imitation occurs on the heels of a failed foreign policy exchange. Having demanded tribute from Paris, the young king is surprised when the French Dauphin mockingly responds with a treasure chest of tennis balls. Immediately, the inexperienced monarch retorts in kind: "When we

have matched our rackets to these balls, / We shall, in France, by God's grace, play a set / Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard" (*H5,* 1.2.261–63). Playing with the image of the tennis balls, Henry responds to the Dauphin's joke as though he were bantering with Falstaff, literally returning serve. As Henry quickly realizes, however, such comic repartee does little to rebut the charge that he is a lightweight. Indeed, it tacitly confirms the Dauphin's jibe by entangling Henry in an ungainly image of kings dueling with tennis rackets through "all the courts of France" (*H5,* 1.2.265). To recover his dignity, Henry therefore abandons the form of the Dauphin's insult. Instead, following his earlier training in *imitatio,* he focuses on copying the insult's sneering effect, leading him to scoff at its scoffing tone: "For many a thousand widows / Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands; / Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down" (1.2.284–86). With this withering rebuttal, Henry outdoes another of his originals, eclipsing the scorn of the Dauphin's initial taunt and convincing the assembled English nobility that their young king can after all get the better of the French.[51]

Having glorified Henry's imitation of effects, *Henry 5* then celebrates a second technique of *imitatio* during his triumph at Agincourt. Massively outnumbered by the French, the English find their courage failing, until Henry rouses them with a comic imitation. Encouraging his soldiers to imagine one of their number at a future gathering in an English alehouse, the young king declares:

> he'll remember, with advantages,
> What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
> Familiar in his mouth as household words—
> Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
> Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester—
> Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered. (*H5,* 4.3.50–55)

In these lines, there is more than a smack of the Falstaffian behavior that Henry abandoned in his earlier exchange with the Dauphin. It is through the old knight that Henry has discovered the "flowing cups" of tavern life, and as an English captain has noted in the previous act, taverns are full of a particular kind of braggart: "a rogue, that now and then goes to the wars, to grace himself at his return into London under the form of a soldier. *And such fellows are perfect in the great commanders' names* . . . among foaming bottles and ale-washed wits" (*H5,* 3.6.63–73, emphasis added). The idealistic English captain disdains such tavern performances, but Henry pragmatically acknowl-

edges in his battle speech that they can have their place. Urging his men to pretend themselves back in an English pub, boasting "with advantages" of their deeds and rehearsing their catalogue of "great commanders' names," he does not deny that they would rather be at home, inflating their achievements. Instead, he embraces this Falstaffian bravado. Inspiring his soldiers to achieve real acts of greatness by mimicking the antics of ale-washed wits, he illustrates the practical benefit of a comic pluralism that embraces low models as well as high.

Finally, during Henry's courtship of princess Katherine, *Henry 5* extols the third of the three goods that the pedagogues located in the imitation of comedy: fortunate mistakes. In spite of Henry's all-conquering charm, his wooing does not start well.[52] Far from being receptive to the young king's advances, his prospective bride expresses her frank disbelief in the words of men: "de tongues of de mans is be full of deceits" (5.2.117). Katherine, it would seem, has Henry figured out. Yet rather than acknowledging as much, the romancing monarch forges on, attempting to convince the princess that he is different: "For these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again . . . but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon" (*H5,* 5.2.151–60). Here, Henry is engaged in a classroom *imitatio* of the constant heavens when he makes a schoolboy error, blundering into an image of the fickle moon: "—or, rather, the sun, and not the moon; for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps his course truly." As his previous imitations of Falstaff have taught him, however, such stumbles can be profitable, and rather than discarding his misplaced image of "the sun and the moon," Henry quickly puts it to good use. Marshaling it as evidence that he is not a fellow of "infinite tongue" but a plain-speaking soldier who cannot get his similes straight, he takes advantage of the unexpected opportunity to prove his enduring virtue—and with it, his flexible *virtù*.

Through these triumphs, *Henry 5* styles Henry's method of learning as one worthy of emulation. Whenever the young king runs into an unanticipated challenge, the comic practices of *imitatio* help him to a creative solution that reinforces his political authority. Yet Shakespeare never forgot the old schoolteachers' caution that imitation was not supposed to be blindly faithful, and so he also fills his play with scenes of Henry's tyranny. There are the king's greedy reasons for laying the torch to France, his bloodcurdling threats to the villagers of Harfleur, his cold willingness to dispose of Bardolph, and the unsettling likelihood that his professed love for Katherine is a lie. Henry is, in short, a selfish man who acts in profoundly antisocial ways, and so as much

as the play celebrates his achievements, it also stresses his political shortcomings, encouraging its audience to see him as Quintilian saw comedy (or as Henry himself saw Falstaff): an imperfect model for making future leaders.

For two hundred years, this is exactly how audiences treated Henry. The first indication of their response comes from the original run of *1 Henry 4* in 1596–97. One of the spectators brought a notebook into the theater[53] and, amid his other scrawlings, jotted down:

> & then ~~y~~^{ou} he must steale Curtesy
> fro*m* Heavn, & dress hy*m*self in
> sutch humillity, as he may pluck
> allegi*a*n*c*e fro*m* men harts euen in
> the pr*e*sence of y^{e} Queene w^{ch} els
> opinion w^{hc} must & doth oft ~~aid~~ help
> one to a Crown will still keepe
> loyall to posession. . . .

For the note-taking spectator, Shakespeare's play was thus neither a source of blind awe nor a prompt to skeptical critique. Instead, it was an opportunity to focus on a useful oratorical moment, and of all the moments that this spectator could have found useful, he selects the one where the senior Henry advises his son to "pluck / allegi*a*n*c*e fro*m* men harts" by hiding his heavenly glow from view. Honing in on the pragmatic strategy that lies beneath the younger Henry's plan to "imitate the sun," the spectator copies down the prince's route to the crown, and over the transcription, this copying becomes explicit. Instead of literally reiterating the senior Henry's remark, "And then I stole all courtesy from heaven," the spectator records, "& then ~~y~~^{ou} he must steale Curtesy / fro*m* Heavn." The spectator, in other words, alters Henry's "I" to a "you," which he then crosses out and replaces with a "he." With this shift from first, to second, and finally to third person, he extrapolates Henry's advice into a general political model that, four lines later, he personally suits to himself. Replacing the "King" of Shakespeare's original play with the "Queene" Elizabeth currently seated on the throne, the spectator adapts the form of Henry's advice to achieve its revolutionary effect in his own time and place.

By copying Henry's crown-grab like this, the spectator reveals how *imitatio* could be a democratic practice: released from princely studies onto the public forum of the stage, the lessons of the old rhetoricians could show everyone the path to power. Shakespeare had himself already hinted at this populist result of *Henry 5* in the prologue, which slyly suggests that if the audience

members use their "imaginary forces" to animate the events onstage, the result will be "a kingdom for a stage" with "monarchs to behold." The prologue, in other words, guides the spectators into an *imitatio,* encouraging them to imaginatively recreate the bare *form* of the performance as a successful theatrical *effect,* and it gently emphasizes the democratic result of this activity by suggesting that it will yield a theater of "monarchs" to behold. Not one monarch, that is, but many, as the audience all pile with Henry onto an increasingly crowded throne. The staunchly Tory Samuel Johnson did not think much of this populist ambition, objecting a century and a half later that "Shakspere does not seem to set distance enough between the performers and spectators."[54] Yet as Henry's own Machiavellian accomplishment makes clear, there was nothing absurd about the idea that Shakespeare's spectators could act their way to power. After all, if sovereignty was conferred not by providence but by *virtù,* then anyone could achieve it, even the rabble of the pit.

And indeed, it was not just the notebook-jotting spectator of *1 Henry 4* who took advantage of the opportunity to follow Henry. In 1811, Charles Lamb sighed in exasperation that "those speeches from Henry the Fifth . . . are current in the mouths of school-boys from their being found in *Enfield Speakers*."[55] Lamb was objecting here to the eighteenth-century practice of having children imitate Shakespeare in school.[56] Like Henry, the playwright had been transformed by his success into a new authority, and although Lamb was not as politically conservative as Johnson, his Romantic idealization of Shakespeare's "matchless image" led him to feel a sense of horror at the spectacle of thousands of little classroom princes, drowning out the true king with their squeaking imitations.[57] Yet as much as Lamb thought that he was defending Shakespeare from the desecrations of schoolboys, their knock-off speeches were fully in keeping with the pedagogical training that had uplifted the Bard himself. Like the oratorical manuals of Shakespeare's own school-days, the rhetorical textbook that drew Lamb's ire—the *Enfield Speaker*—saw the "proper" course of instruction as the one that was "the most useful."[58] And in a pragmatic move that would have earned a grin from Machiavelli, the *Speaker* immediately prefaced Henry's Falstaffian battle speech with the previous king's dying advice: "Therefore, my Harry, / Be it thy course to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" (362). When schoolboys drew themselves up to speak Henry's words at Agincourt, they were thus encouraged to see themselves as instruments of realpolitik: keep peace at home by sacking France. And if this, as Lamb complained, "positively destroy[ed] the illusion," that was not necessarily a bad thing. Revealing that Henry was not perfect

poetry but a worldly man, it helped generations of young men learn the pragmatics of taking power.

Nor was it only schoolboys who adopted this approach to the *Henriad.* In 1773, John Bell published a new edition of Shakespeare based on contemporary theatrical scripts (many of which took great liberties with the original texts). On the face of it, this would seem a book without a market; surely those readers who were interested in reading Shakespeare's words would seek out a historically faithful edition, while those who preferred dramatic liveliness would skip the bookstore for the theater. Yet the collection sold well in England and America, for, as Bell explained, many theatergoers liked to bring copies of the plays to live performances and read along: "from this part of our design, an evident use will arise; those who take books to the THEATRE, will not be so puzzled themselves to accompany the speaker."[59] Bell makes clear, moreover, that this "accompaniment" was not always of the silent sort. Rather than mouthing along, many audience members read out loud, and to facilitate their efforts, Bell prefaced his collection with "An Essay on Oratory" that contained pages of detailed instructions on voice modulation, pronunciation, and spoken emphasis. In the main, the passages that most excited the audience were from *Othello, Macbeth,* and Shakespeare's other tragedies, but there was one passage from *Henry 5* that garnered a similar response: the speech at Agincourt. So it was that the dramatic critic of the *World* recommended the play in 1789 by enthusing on "this speech—this delightful speech where Shakspere's genius has its play, and indeed, the Player's art as gloriously sports and soars along with it."[60]

The audiences who bought Bell's prompt book were, moreover, treated to a special version of Henry's speech. Samuel Johnson had groused of the original, "This speech . . . is too long,"[61] and in his 1723 revival, Aaron Hill slashed its final twenty-seven lines down to eighteen, concluding with "We few, we happy Few! we Band of Brothers! / For He, to-day, who sheds his Blood with me, / Shall be my Brother, be he ne'er so mean!"[62] Within the play itself, this literal extension of the royal family is a boisterously democratic moment, and for audiences armed with Bell's prompt book, it was a chance to participate themselves. Speaking with Henry in the first-person plural—"We few, we happy Few! we Band of Brothers!"—they joined their voices to the king's, becoming part of his company. In doing so, they fulfilled the prologue's opening promise to make them all monarchs, an invitation that Hill had further extended with the couplet: "Art is too poor, to raise the Dead, 'tis true: / But Nature does it, by their Worth, in You!" This is doggerel of the kind to chill

Lamb's blood, but its implications are cheerfully clear. The spectators have not come to mull a departed king but to resurrect his example through their own triumphant brotherhood.

A decade after Bell published his book, Henry's example was then incorporated into one of the most important democratic speeches of the eighteenth century: George Washington's farewell address to the Continental Army. Washington was an avid theatergoer who had previously sprinkled Shakespeare into his military correspondence,[63] and he again turned to the playwright in his closing speech to his troops. Now that the war had ended, many Americans expected Washington to declare himself king. But instead, the victorious general took a page from *Henry 5*.[64] Remarking on "the astonishing Events" that had just "taken place on the stage of human action," he noted the most remarkable of all: "that Men who came from the different parts of the Continent, strongly disposed by the habits of education, to dispise and quarrel with each other, would instantly become but one patriotic *band of Brothers*."[65] Instead of ending his military career by insinuating his own regal authority, Washington uses Henry's famous phrase to insist on the leveling effects of their struggle, and following the first-person plural model of "We few, we happy few," he then continues: "the enlarged prospect of happiness, opened by the confirmation of our Independence and Sovereignty, almost exceeds the power of description . . . In such a Republic, who will exclude [us] from the rights of Citizens?" Pointedly observing that the purpose of the war has been to secure "our" independence, sovereignty, and happiness, Washington includes his men in his "Republic" of free "Citizens." As he does so, moreover, he echoes *Henry 5* one more time: "exceeds the power of description." Perhaps Washington was consciously imitating the play's prologue here, or perhaps the convergence was a lucky accident. But either way, the effect was the same. Calling attention to the weakness of his representational "power," the greatest soldier in his nation's history publicly acknowledged the limits of his own example. He was not a perfect accompt, but a man who needed his audience's creative faculties to complete the picture.

With this populist move, Washington joined with Henry's other imitators in illustrating the counterintuitive political effects of *imitatio.* The origins of this practice, as we have seen, lay in a mechanical act of iteration that seems the opposite of democratic individuality, never more spectacularly than when the Greek orator Demosthenes sat down to copy Thucydides "eight times over."[66] Because of such displays, *imitatio* has fallen out of favor with modern educators, who have worried that its rhetorical repetitions divest students of

their autonomy.[67] Yet in practice, this activity formed a basis for self-rule. Plato saw it as a breeding ground for *demokratia,* and certainly, there was no fiercer advocate for Athenian democracy than the rote-copying Demosthenes, a man who so opposed the imperial designs of King Philip of Macedon that he took up the arms of a hoplite at the age of forty-six to fight the tyrant at Chaeronea.[68] What seems antidemocratic in theory has thus functioned historically as a source of popular sovereignty, and Washington's band of brothers speech suggests that the same can be said of *Henry 5*. When the note-taking spectator, the Enfield speakers, the prompt-book accompanists, and Washington himself copied Henry's *virtù,* they encouraged common folk to act like kings, supporting Machiavelli's belief that the same comic pragmatism that lifted up tyrants could also empower the people.

For more than two hundred years, Henry's method of snatching power thus functioned as a broadly democratic tool, and even as the rhetorical practice of *imitatio* was supplanted over the nineteenth century by more utopian forms of democratic education, there were a few old pragmatists who resisted. Of these, perhaps the most notable was Abraham Lincoln. On August 17, 1863—a week after meeting with Frederick Douglass to discuss the formation of black military regiments—Lincoln invited the American actor James Hackett to the White House. As Hackett discovered when he arrived, the president had a very specific reason for welcoming him: "He [Lincoln] was particularly anxious to know why one of the best scenes in the play—that where Falstaff & Prince Hal alternately assume the character of the King—is omitted in the representation."[69] Lincoln, that is, greatly enjoyed watching Falstaff and Henry "assume the character of the King" in *1 Henry 4,* and he wanted to know why Hackett had cut the scene from his production. In response, Hackett explained, "it is admirable to read but ineffective on stage [for] there is generally nothing sufficiently distinctive about the actor who plays Henry to make an imitation striking." Hackett thus noted that the king-playing scene only really worked "on stage" when it had been preceded by a "striking" performance by the senior Henry in the play's opening monologue. And such performances, he observed, were rare. Indeed, it had become common in the nineteenth century for directors to prune the elder Henry's opening lines, reducing him to little more than a hasty prologue.

In this exchange with Lincoln, Hackett puts his finger on the democratic foundation of the *Henriad*: the presence of a strong king to copy. Without it, as Hackett perceives, Falstaff and the prince have no rhetorical model for "imitation," making it impossible for them "to assume the character of the

King." Yet rather than sharing the president's concern at the crumbling of this foundation, Hackett sees no reason to preserve it, for it is accidental to what he calls the "*moral*" of the *Henriad*: "The staff upon which Fat Jack relied to support him through life was composed of his *wit and humor* and self-assurance, but it proved in the end a *false staff*."[70] Subjecting Falstaff's name to a clerical exegesis, the actor suggests that the *Henriad* is not an illustration of the practical benefits of comedy but a sermon on the evils of "*wit and humor*." And while Hackett's particular brand of idealism was unusually puritanical, his general approach was becoming the norm in Lincoln's day. The Romantic cautions of A. W. Schlegel prompted generations of nineteenth-century readers to look warily on Henry's behavior,[71] and by 1826, editions of *Henry 5* were being printed with the warning remark: "However much Shakspeare celebrates the French conquest of King Henry, still he has not omitted to hint to us, after his way, the secret springs of this undertaking. Henry was in want of foreign wars to secure himself on the throne."[72] This editorial note pointed to the same feature of Henry's rule that the *Enfield Speaker* had identified as the motive cause for Agincourt, but rather than encouraging audiences to act like practical princes, it urged them now to keep a critical distance.

With its suspicion of kings, its belief that readers should be free to think for themselves, and its distaste for worldly pragmatism, this new approach to *Henry 5* embodied the nineteenth century's philosophical turn toward more utopian forms of populism.[73] As Schlegel's younger brother and roommate Frederick proclaimed, "universal . . . democracy [*universeller . . . demokratisch*]" would usher in an age of "eternal peace," putting an end to human suffering and making a heaven out of earth.[74] Where America's first president could unselfconsciously copy Henry's words, its sixteenth thus found himself in an age that was busily exchanging the rhetorical practices of the past for the more perfect principles of the future. Lincoln did not possess the knowledge of Shakespeare to quibble with this revision, but he did possess the same physical faculty that checked Falstaff before he did away with a king: "instinct." And instinct told this most pragmatic of presidents—who a few days earlier had agreed that the emancipation of slaves was not just morally right but militarily necessary—that something valuable had disappeared from the *Henriad* when it lost its monarch. For by deposing the tyrant Machiavel, his more idealistic critics had also unseated his accidental contribution to democracy: a model for how we all, no matter how vile our blood or mean, could imitate the sun.

The Pursuit of Indolence

It was a truth self-evident to the signers of the Declaration of Independence that men were endowed with certain unalterable rights. And then Thomas Jefferson altered one of them.[1] Originally, the Colonial Declaration of 1774 had set forth men's rights as: "life, liberty, and property."[2] But in the 1776 Preamble, Jefferson replaced "property" with "the pursuit of happiness."[3] The Virginian had some precedent for this amendment in his friend George Mason's 1776 Virginia Declaration, which had begun by asserting that all men had "inherent natural rights . . . among which are the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."[4] Mason had thus already listed "pursuing . . . happiness" as an inalienable right—yet even so, he had not eliminated "possessing property." Instead, he had included it alongside. When Jefferson compressed Mason's language, he thus quietly made his own radical claim. Happiness, he suggested, was more fundamental than possessions.

As groundbreaking as Jefferson's revision was, it did not come from nowhere. He privately acknowledged that he had been inspired by Epicurus's ancient reformulation of happiness as "indolence," the freedom from property and other man-made cares. Years before the Declaration, moreover, this indolent view of happiness had been revived by a loose tradition of English comic playwrights to address a nagging contradiction in early modern efforts to establish more equal forms of government. Like the ancient Athenians, England's freedom-espousing liberals had maintained a commitment to property that politically marginalized the poor and completely disenfranchised women, the colonized, and slaves, all of whom found themselves categorized as possessions. By abolishing ownership, Epicurean happiness offered a way

to eliminate such inequities, an emancipation that was gloriously dramatized by a string of indolent seventeenth-century New Comedies in which men threw away their money and wives threw off their wedding rings. These property-rejecting romps proved popular in the American colonies—in fact, our surviving performance records indicate that they were the most frequently staged pre-Revolutionary plays—and among their enthusiastic witnesses was Jefferson. Despite his own massive wealth, the Virginian could appreciate the practical value of a non-possessive pursuit of happiness; and by tracing the comic history and results of Jefferson's revision of the Declaration, this chapter will describe how it helped America's impetuous, *virtù*-seeking democracy become more indolently free.

"Happiness" can mean many things,[5] but for Jefferson it denoted something particular: the absence of care described in the third-century BCE by Epicurus.[6] Epicurus had long been condemned by Christian moralists as a gross sensualist, but Jefferson dissented, remarking to one of his young protégés: "I . . . am an Epicurean. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us."[7] Of these "genuine" doctrines of Epicurus, Jefferson listed the primary one as: "Happiness is the aim of life."[8] By "happiness," Jefferson was careful to note, Epicurus did not imply the pleasure that came from having one's fill of food and drink. Indeed, far from seeing happiness as the having of anything, the ancient philosopher meant it as a lacking: "The highest joy is the expulsion of the bad—that is all we mean by the good."[9]

Prior to Jefferson, this modest view of happiness had baffled not just the heaven-seeking clerics of the Middle Ages but most of the pagan philosophers of Epicurus's own day. To Platonists and other thinkers of an idealistic bent, the good was much more than an absence of the bad. It was a positive entity, a higher reality to be pursued and, for the noble few, attained. Like the ancient comics, however, Epicurus took a fundamentally pragmatic approach to life. He focused his attention on everyday bodily concerns: "The flesh cries out from hunger, thirst, and cold."[10] And in keeping with this problem-based ethic, he was wary of philosophical efforts to promote wisdom, honor, and other immaterial ideals.[11] From his materialist perspective, these ideals were fictions of the mind, and he noted that people who pursued them usually ended up disappointed, ashamed, or worse. As far back as men could remember, the notion of virtue had been used by hierarchies of priests and magistrates to authorize stern punishments in the service of gods who could not

be touched or seen. What began as a utopian hope had ended as a physical scourge, adding to the body's suffering instead of relieving it.

In this class of counterproductive aspirations, Epicurus included something that surprised many of his critics: property.[12] From Epicurus's materialist point of view, after all, property would naturally seem the summum bonum. What could give the flesh more tangible relief than the pleasures of diamonds, concubines, and wine-dispensing slaves? This was the line of thinking that prompted subsequent Christian moralists to assume that Epicurus must have been a wallowing hedonist—surely, a man who rejected idealism must end up worshiping idols of gold. Yet as Epicurus delicately made clear, pragmatism by no means authorized gross consumption. From a rigorously pragmatic perspective, there was no higher good of any kind—spiritual or material—to be gained. There were only problems to be solved. And since men's efforts to enrich themselves had brought endless conflict, anxiety, and suffering into the world, and since these problems originated in concepts of ownership that had no permanent basis in nature, the best thing to do was let them all go. If people wanted to be as happy as life would let them be, they would indolently forget their fantasies of spouses, lands, and servants, ridding the world of the manufactured miseries of possession.[13]

Jefferson summed up this abnegative ethics by declaring: "true felicity [is] In-do-lence . . . the absence of pain."[14] And while the Virginian was quick to claim that he had learned equally valuable lessons from Jesus—he just lacked the time, he apologized to his protégé, to write them out—his account of Epicurus's fleshly pragmatism was uncommonly faithful, avoiding the dilutions and anachronisms of many of the ancient sage's other self-declared admirers. Although the Greek had enjoyed a sympathetic following since the rediscovery of Lucretius's Epicurean poem *The Nature of Things* in 1417, there was a tendency among his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers to treat him as a natural philosopher (and even a metaphysician). His account of atomism influenced Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, and the very title of Lucretius's text seemed to imply that Epicurus had wanted his followers to peer into the material fabric of the cosmos.[15] Epicurus, however, wanted nothing of the sort. He viewed natural philosophy as a subfield of ethics,[16] and his support for atomism was meant not to promote research into physics but to relieve his followers from their fear of death.[17] Much of this fear, he observed, sprang from the belief in Hell, and so by claiming that the dead disintegrated entirely into atoms, Epicurus gave his followers the consolation of knowing that there could be no immortal soul to suffer in the afterlife. Like the rest of

his ethical practice, Epicurus's engagement with natural philosophy was thus fundamentally deconstructive. Instead of establishing new theories, he focused on purging the anxieties generated by the old.

Although Jefferson was unusual among his contemporaries in stressing the deconstructive thrust of Epicureanism, he was not the first person in history to do so. Twenty centuries earlier, the same understanding of Epicurean happiness had been promoted by the most famous author of New Comedy—Menander.[18] Menander served in the Athenian army with Epicurus, and he filled his works with the sage's teachings, perhaps most succinctly in *The Necklace*: "Chase away anything that causes pain [λυπουν]."[19] The prompt for this teaching in *The Necklace* is a man who has made himself miserable by taking a rich wife, and in keeping with Epicurus's negative view of possession-mongering, Menander's comedies consistently associate the pursuit of property with misery. One of their stock characters is the property lover who emanates discontent,[20] and Menander's comic association between unhappiness and possessiveness proved resonant enough that, a century later, the Roman New Comic Plautus would make it the basis of his enduringly popular *Aulularia.* In this romantic farce, a man devotes himself to guarding a little pot of gold, an obsession that—as the audience is told four separate times in the first thirty lines—has filled his home with "misery [*misera*]."[21] Finally, the man himself confesses, "I am miserable [*miser*] too,"[22] drawing the connection between money grubbing and sadness that would lead generations of greedy hoarders to become known simply as "misers." In such moments, the New Comics put their finger on what Epicurus saw as the irony of acquisition: "Men gain property [οὐσίας], but lose contentment."[23] And just like Epicurus, the remedy these playwrights prescribed was a letting go. As the jealously possessive Polemon is told in the final moments of *Perikeiromene*: "Forget [ἐπιλαθου] what you've been doing."[24] Using the term—ἐπίληθον—that Homer had attached to a narcotic drug, the comedy counseled its audience to consign their thoughts of owning to oblivion.[25]

To help inculcate this practice of forgetfulness, Menander's New Comedies inverted the narrative structure of Old Comedy. Where plays such as *Lysistrata* and *Frogs* had stressed the depth of the crisis confronting their characters, Menander instead emphasizes the speed of its resolution. His comedies typically begin with an exposition-loaded preamble that fills in the historical origins of the problem (and often its subsequent complications).[26] This device allows New Comedy to accelerate into the solution, and indeed, in some cases the solution has already arrived before the curtains open. When *Samia*

gets underway, a young man is nervously preparing to ask his father's permission to marry his sweetheart—not knowing that his father already approves. Although we watch for five acts as father and son miscommunicate, they have been on the same page from the start. As this example indicates, moreover, Menander's plays traffic in a very different class of problems than the ones explored in Old Comedy. There are no wars to be ended or cities to be reformed. Instead, the crises of his New Comedies typically result from errors in perception. Many times the error is nothing more than a failure to recognize someone's true identity—the tragedian's old device of *harmatia*.[27] But even when the mistake is more fundamental—a jealous possessiveness of one's mistress or a greedy desire for gold—it generally falls within the class of man-made problems that Epicurus believed could just be forgotten. And so where the characters of Aristophanes are tasked with building cloud castles or voyaging to Hell, Menander's simply have to clear their minds.

The superficial nature of these problems has often led Menander's plays to be taxed with a lack of originality. The same characters appear again and again—often with exactly the same names. And so too do the same situations repeat themselves, to be rectified once more by an act of oblivion. Such simplicity, however, was fully in keeping with Epicurus's practice, which treated people's desire for novelty as another artificial source of misery.[28] This seems a somewhat austere basis for comedy, yet it was heartily embraced by Menander's audiences, who voted him eight prizes,[29] and it was subsequently picked up by the Roman comics. Both Plautus and Terence adopted Menander's focus on make-believe problems, and even Terence's *Phormio* (which is rare among the playwright's work in having no known Menandrian source) ends with a scene in which a wife agrees to forget her husband's misbehavior—provided that he forget their son's. In classic Epicurean fashion, happiness comes from letting go.

This comic emphasis on forgetfulness supported democratic practice in two ways.[30] First, by banishing a positive conception of 'the good,' Epicurus's definition of happiness tacitly rebutted Plato's critique of *demokratia*. If there was no perfect state to be attained, then there was no need for philosopher-kings to whip the masses into shape. Second, by eliminating wealth, Epicurus did away with the inequalities of a stratified economy. If more than enough brought no greater happiness (and, in fact, generally increased everyone's misery), then what reason did the rich have to deprive the poor? As is typical of his deconstructive method, Epicurus thus promoted populism by removing a pair of obstacles—utopian despots and grasping plutocrats—and the

positive results of this abnegative approach can be glimpsed in his will. When Epicurus died, Athenian law prohibited noncitizens from owning property, so he was obligated to bequeath the Garden (the outdoor space where he and his students practiced forgetting their cares) to a pair of Athenian citizens.[31] He did so, however, on the "condition" that "they shall hand over the Garden and all that pertains to it" to the mixed collective of citizens and noncitizens that constituted his followers. Accepting the law in order to undo it, Epicurus briskly dismantled the man-made hierarchies of Athens.[32]

While Menander and Epicurus enjoyed considerable influence in the ancient world, their view of happiness as the absence of care vanished in the Middle Ages, replaced by various Christian, neo-Platonic, and Aristotelian understandings of happiness as a positive good. In seventeenth-century England, however, indolence experienced a popular revival that began with the plays of Ben Jonson.[33] Jonson's fascination with classical learning led him to purchase and annotate his own copy of Lucretius,[34] and although Jonson preferred to identify himself with the very different doctrines of the Stoics, he allotted Epicurus's account of happiness a prominent place in his comedies. As the unhappy protagonist of *Every Man In His Humour* (1598) is taught in the final act, "Your cares are nothing: they are like my cap, soon put on, and as soon put off . . . an' I had twice as many cares as you have, I'd drown them all in a cup of sack."[35] Our hero's problems, in other words, are as extrinsic as his clothes, allowing them to be doffed by a swig of liquid amnesia. In the category of such dispensable troubles, Jonson included property—"What need hath Nature of silver dishes?"[36]—and he provided an extended account of how to purge them in *Bartholomew Fayre* (1614). This flesh-soaked comedy offers up the spectacle of Justice Overdo,[37] a lawman who goes undercover to uncover the "enormities" of the wicked and soon finds himself making more and more "discoveries": "This is the very *womb,* and *bed* of enormitie . . . Another special enormitie . . . a pernicious enormity . . . This will prove my chiefest enormity." Yet when Overdo arrives at the end of the play, he learns that the way to a better world is not to publish his moral judgments, but to strike them from his mind: "forget your other name of *Overdo*, and invite us all to supper. There you and I will compare our *discoveries*; and drown the memory of all enormity in your bigg'st bowle at home" (88). Overdo's real discovery, in short, is that his long list of social problems reflects his own man-made view of right and wrong, and so the remedy is simply to drink his "memory" away.

Bartholomew Fayre remained popular through the early eighteenth century—

Samuel Pepys attended four performances in a single year—and, as late as 1771, *Every Man in His Humour* was staged in Williamsburg, where it may have been seen by Jefferson (who at any rate, liked it enough to buy a copy for his grandchildren).[38] After Jonson's death, moreover, his indolent approach to comedy was expanded by successive generations of English playwrights who took advantage of their audience's growing familiarity with Epicureanism.[39] Over the second half of the seventeenth century, Epicurus's unorthodox views on happiness were popularly disseminated through vernacular translations such as Walter Charleton's *Epicurus' Morals* (1656), which kicked off with the brisk declaration that the "*Summum Bonum* of mans life, which is PLEASURE, consist[s] in the Indolency of the Body, & Tranquility of the Mind."[40] Here, nearly verbatim, is the defense of the "Summum Bonum" that Jefferson would scratch into his notebook a century later, and although Charleton sows his work with reminders of Christian morality, he faithfully expounds every key tenet of indolence. He notes that the good is nothing more than the absence of the bad: "to be happy, in this life, it is sufficient to be exempted from those miseries, by which one might have been afflicted" (9). He explains that it is only possible to decrease pain, not increase pleasure: "hereupon it follows also, that the highest Pleasure terminated in the privation of pain, may indeed be varied and distinguished; but can never be Augmented or Amplified" (26). He observes that although there are men who "possesse all things," their property does not make them happy, for they "live full of Anxiety and Complainings, having their minds perpetually on the rack of cares, sollicitude, and fears" (3). And he suggests that the way to happiness is to forget artificial cares: "the mind being by degrees taken off from the Cause of its trouble, is brought at length to almost an absolute forgetfullnesse thereof" (139).

Charleton's Epicurean equation of happiness with "forgetfullnesse" was well suited to a readership that had just suffered through a lengthy civil war driven by the Puritans' desire to impose the opposite form of satisfaction: a remembrance of divine virtue. If *Epicurus' Morals* was correct, then England could readily repair this ruinous course, for the troubles that had spawned the war could—like other man-made concerns—simply be forgotten away. This elegant solution proved popular at court, and it was not long before a new wave of comedies began exploring the social implications of indolence. In 1663, Abraham Cowley produced *Cutter of Coleman Street,* a revised version of a comedy called *The Guardian* that had been performed before the outbreak of hostilities. Cowley's preface acknowledges the grim events that have

transpired since then, but rather than brooding, the playwright banishes his cares by remembering Lucretius. "Indolency," he declares, "would serve my turn instead of Pleasure," and having adopted this Epicurean view of happiness, he goes on to offer his audience the opportunity to participate in such "indolency" themselves.[41] The pre–civil war version of the play had hinged upon a young woman's effort to seduce a virtuous hero, a crime that was eventually corrected by the intervention of the active good of Providence: "All my plots are spoil'd . . . I do confess I've wrong'd you, / But Heav'n has seen you righted."[42] In the later version, however, no actual misdeed is attempted. The young woman disguises herself merely to determine whether the hero's affections for his bride are honest: "do not you believe now that I had a design to lie with you . . . [I] did it purely to try upon what terms your two Romantique Loves stood" (69). The problem of the play, in short, exists only in the minds of the characters, and so all that these characters need to do, as the hero notes in his closing lines, is rid themselves of their "unjust suspicions" (69). What had, prior to the influence of Epicurus's ethics, been a play about the acquisition of real virtue had now become a Lucretian exercise in forgetting an imagined bad.

A few years later, this Lucretian turn was further popularized by Thomas Shadwell. Abused by royalists as the one writer in England who "never deviate[d] into sense," Shadwell was, in fact, an intelligent man who wrote joyfully anti-intellectual plays.[43] Like Epicurus, Shadwell had thought hard enough to realize that thinking could breed its own problems, and in *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), he followed his idol Ben Jonson in exploring the benefits of an oblivious happiness.[44] After treating the audience to a parade of human follies, the comedy concludes with its female lead declaring, "No Wedding day was ever so troublesome as this has been to me" (96). To which the gallant hero replies, "Make haste and quit the Trouble." A happy ending, that is, comes not from gaining a conjugal bliss but from leaving a "trouble" behind, and no sooner has the gallant spoken than all the characters agree: "Now to some distant desert let's repair: / And there put off all our unhappy Care" (96). Forsaking the dreams of marriage for a "desert"—the term Lucretius had used to describe the absolute peace of the void—they reimagine felicity as the removal of "Care."[45]

A decade later, Shadwell continued this exploration of Epicurean indolence in *The Virtuoso* (1676). The play's opening words are "Thou great Lucretius!" and from here, its hero proceeds to quote the Latin lines of *De Rerum Natura* that describe the "highest tranquility [*summa pace*]" as the "absence

of pain [*privata dolore*]."[46] Having laid out Epicurus's core teaching, *The Virtuoso* then dedicates itself to lampooning Robert Boyle and the empiricists of the Royal Society for missing the point. Instead of realizing that Epicurean atomism is a tool for clearing away the fear of death, these half-witted researchers have taken it as a prompt to dig deeper into the nature of matter. By doing so, they have reversed the deconstructive method of Epicurus's philosophy, associating satisfaction not with the shedding of trouble but with the building up of knowledge. The result of this un-Epicurean pursuit of happiness, *The Virtuoso* bluntly suggests, is misery. After bankrupting himself in the pursuit of useless information, Sir Nicholas Grimcrack is left first by his wife and then by his mistress, and as he totters offstage with his fortune in ruins, he sets himself up for more heartache by declaring his intention to seek out the philosopher's stone.

With this final dig at "Sir" Nicholas, Shadwell touches lightly on the democratic implications of indolence. Although Sir Nicholas fails to recognize that Epicurean atomism dissolves the basis for the man-made hierarchies that he and the other two members of his triumvirate of fools—Sir Formal Trifle and Sir Samuel Hearty—take for granted, the play offers a running satire on the pretentions of property-grabbing aristocrats. Through a telescope, the audience bears witness to "a very ambitious Prince" who aims to establish a "Universal Monarchy" on the moon, only to discover that it is "too hard" (71). No less cluelessly, meanwhile, Sir Nicholas displays a broadcasting device that he has invented to help his own liege consolidate power: "there needs but one Parson to preach to a whole County; the King may then take all the Church-Lands into his own hands" (70). Such ear-splitting sermons, Sir Nicholas notes enthusiastically, would also banish a pernicious source of indolence: the "sedentary life" enjoyed by "idle Fellows" who retreat to the countryside for quiet (70). Failing to learn from the delusional monarch on the moon, the nobleman dreams of a world in which the rustic peace treasured by Epicurus is drowned out by the omnipresent booming of authority.

In taking this satiric view of universal kings, Shadwell aligned himself with a group of Whigs who shared both his appreciation for indolence and his distrust of absolute rule.[47] These Whigs were by no means populists—they included such well-heeled aristocrats as the Duke of Buckingham, the Duke of Rochester, and Sir Charles Sedley.[48] Yet they were firmly opposed to enlarging the authority of the Crown, fearing in particular that the ascension of a Catholic would result in religious absolutism. Given this concern, Epicurus was a useful ally, for his materialist theology suggested that the gods were too

busy being indolent to choose our earthly regents.[49] As Buckingham would translate Lucretius, "The gods, by right of nature, must possess / An everlasting age of perfect peace; / Far off removed from us and our affairs."[50] Just like the comic playwrights, that is, Buckingham and his fellow Whigs appreciated the abnegative thrust of Epicurus's ethics, and the fit between Epicureanism and Whiggism was so convenient that when John Locke summed up his ethical views in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), he claimed that all men should be allowed "life, liberty, health, and indolency of body."[51] Reclaiming "indolency" (or, in the Latin original, "indolentiam") from the Christian moralists who had associated it with slothful vice, Locke styled it as a tool for shrugging off the artificial rules of priests and kings.[52]

Yet even as Locke embraced "life, liberty, and . . . indolency," he did not wholly accept Epicurus's view of happiness. Instead, he clung hard to the belief that the good life also involved the possession of property. As Locke's full formulation runs: "life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; *and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like*."[53] Locke, that is, hoped to have it both ways. Like the heroes of Shadwell's comedies, he wanted the abnegative pleasures of an Epicurean life. But by also declaring his desire to own land and cash and dinner tables, he ignored the pragmatic foundation of Epicurus's ethics. No less than the atom-seekers of the Royal Society, the Lucretius-spouting aristocrats at court, or the monarch on the moon, Locke had lost the plot, failing to grasp the underlying logic of indolence.

Shadwell's comedies, in contrast, faithfully maintained Epicurus's original contrast of happiness and property. Instead of seeking wives and other permanent possessions, Shadwell's lovers went wooing with lines like: "whatsoever use I shall make of your Ladyship, I shall return you again, and ne'r alter the property."[54] Such cheeky proposals were intended to provoke a laugh, but buried in their humor was a serious point: Shadwell's characters had separated themselves from earlier English comedies that championed the importance of owning a spouse. Eighty years earlier in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (c. 1599), Claudio had been beside himself with joy when he had discovered that Hero was truly his—her virginity intact, her body transferred to him through marriage—leading Benedick to declare that if "thou art sad," then "get thee a wife, get thee a wife."[55] In pointed contrast, Shadwell's characters had no interest in "getting" a wife, for as Lucretius had taught them,[56] the surest source of misery (in love as in all pursuits) was the yearning to possess.[57]

Shadwell's disavowal of marriage was, to be sure, targeted primarily at the young rakes in his audience, but even as the playwright egged on libertine males, his Epicurean view of romance had an emancipating effect on women as well. Since women were no longer goods to be taken and kept, Shadwell's comedies frequently ended with their heroines rejecting marriage,[58] and a decade after Locke published his *Letter,* this feminist consequence of indolence was explored further by another of Ben Jonson's self-proclaimed followers, William Congreve. Congreve's library contained no less than four copies of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura,*[59] and in keeping with Shadwell's earlier comedies, Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) portrays its female protagonist spurning a marriage proposal: "My dear Liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful Solitude, my darling Contemplation must I bid you then Adieu? Ay-h adieu.—my morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs,* ye *Someils du Matin adieu*—I can't do't, 'tis more than Impossible."[60] Like the gods described by Lucretius, this unattached woman values her "indolent" freedoms as the highest good. She has not the slightest desire to chitchat with her husband's idiotic friends, humor his intolerable "relations," or in any way endure the man-made troubles of wedded life. And because she is no man's property, no man can make her. While Locke held fast to his possessions, Congreve's heroine thus articulates the freeing result of Epicurus's approach. If the gods had no need to accumulate spouses, then why on earth did males?

Over the eighteenth century, this Epicurean attitude continued to be cultivated by English playwrights, leading to a pair of comedies that became enormously popular in the American colonies. The first was *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707) of George Farquhar.[61] A year earlier, in *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), Farquhar had articulated an Epicurean view of the good life by suggesting that soldiering was attractive not because it brought glory and riches but because it allowed men to escape their families: "We shall lead more happy lives / By getting rid of brats and wives."[62] Or, as the title character sums up the happy ending, "the recruiting trade, with all its train / Of endless plague, fatigue, and endless pain, / I gladly quit" (94). In *The Beaux Stratagem,* Farquhar then took this ethics of indolence a step further, stretching the lightly feminist marriage rejections of Shadwell and Congreve into a radical alternative to matrimony. While half of the play chronicles the impoverished gentleman Aimwell as he marches toward the altar, the other half concerns the failed marriage of Mrs. Sullen, who exclaims that her husband is "a perpetual offense . . . a gnawing vulture at the heart . . . a porcupine to the feeling."[63] In

another kind of play, Squire Sullen would be reformed into a nobler husband, but in *The Beaux Stratagem,* a more pragmatic solution is found: divorce. Initially, the squire resists. Declaring that he is no "atheist," he insists that he will "do nothing against the law," and while the squire's commitment to his principles eventually wanes, he continues to hold fast to a more material objection: his wife is worth ten thousand pounds, and he is loath to give that money up (69). Finally, however, a remedy to the squire's possessiveness is found—an alcoholic "dram" that washes away his care (90). In New Comic fashion, the problem of property is solved by forgetting it, and so at the same time that Aimwell gets married, Mrs. Sullen gets her divorce.

Mulling on these two endings, the play's narrator indulges in a frankly Epicurean sentiment: "'Twould be hard to guess which of these parties is the better pleased, the couple joined, or the couple parted; the one rejoicing in hopes of an untasted happiness, and the other in their deliverance from an experienced misery" (90). Suggesting that Mrs. Sullen is as delighted as a newlywed with her divorce, the play equates the shedding of a "misery" with the gaining of a perfect mate. And indeed, by locating the felicity of the married couple in their "hopes," *The Beaux Stratagem* cheekily implies that the pleasures of divorce may well be more lasting. Mrs. Sullen, after all, was once an optimistic young bride, her head stuffed full of expectations, and she did not make it fourteen months. So, too, may it prove for Aimwell and his love, but they can at least take comfort in knowing that the porcupine care of marriage can always be forgotten away.

For a work that took such a pragmatic view of human relations, *The Beaux Stratagem* was surprisingly popular in the American colonies. In general, the colonists were of a moralistic disposition. Many of them viewed theater as an inducement to vice, and even its patrons preferred their plays to have a sermonizing tone, queuing up to see the virtue of *Cato,* the piety of *George Barnwell,* and the morality-tale structure of *Richard III*.[64] Yet *The Beaux Stratagem* proved more popular than any of these wholesome pieces, premiering in 1732 in New York and remaining in the colonial repertoire until the theaters were closed in 1774.[65] Like Mrs. Sullen, after all, these colonists were in the grip of an absent lord who was clinging to them for their wealth, and in her solution, they caught a glimmer of their own. It was not uncommon in the buildup to the Revolution to refer to the Declaration of Independence as a form of divorce, and while the colonists no doubt shared some of Mr. Sullen's concerns about this atheistic practice, they could also take comfort in his wife's Epicurean deliverance. So it was that *The Beaux Stratagem*

was performed after the war for President Washington,[66] and when Jefferson died, it was one of the books in his Monticello library.[67]

Two decades after *The Beaux Stratagem* premiered, another Epicurean comedy made an even deeper impression on the American colonists: John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). In our own time, *The Beggar's Opera* has generally been seen as a satire, whether on Italian opera, Britain's royal ministers, the London criminal justice system, or all of the world at once. To claim something as a satire, however, is to suggest that the author believes in reform, and Gay had a rather more resigned view of things, remarking to Jonathan Swift, "As I can have no more hopes, I can no more be disappointed."[68] Here, Gay is consoled not by the possibility that things will improve but by the realization that the world will never give him what he wants, and he carried this attitude to the grave. As he sighed out from his tombstone: "Life is a jest; and all things show it, / I thought so once; but now I know it."[69]

Gay's pessimistic view of life did not, however, prevent him from finding happiness. Gay was a reader of Lucretius, and in his ode "Wine" (1708), he compared the obliviating effects of alcohol to the practice of Epicureanism: "With what sublimest joy from noisy town, / At rural seat, Lucretius retir'd."[70] While Gay believed that there was no good to be found in the crash of a worldly existence, he thus felt that it was possible to gain a measure of relief by forgetting for a while, and this Epicurean ethos informs every riotous line of *The Beggar's Opera.* The play begins with the grim observation that, "Through all the employments of life / Each neighbor abuses his brother," and it then spends its length cataloguing this neighborly abuse.[71] We watch Peachum betray his fellow criminals to the gallows for a few odd coins. We watch Macheath feed Polly a diet of romance novels to dupe her into sex. We watch Polly's mother conspire to have Macheath hanged so that she can claim his property. And we watch Macheath try to wriggle out of his doom by declaring his total devotion to two women at once. As these dismal spectacles unfold, the play drops aphorisms worthy of Plautus at his most unsentimental: "No woman would ever marry, if she had not the chance of mortality for a release" (34). "All men are thieves in love, and like a woman better for being another's property" (6). "A moment in time may make us unhappy forever" (40).

What is most striking about these lines is not their bleakness, although they are certainly bleak. It is their matter-of-fact delivery. Like Machiavelli when he notes that prudent kings dispose of the friends who help them to power, or Darwin when he observes that it is in the interest of queen bees to murder their daughters, *The Beggar's Opera* unsentimentally exposes the

logic of worldly success. This logic was by no means a source of pleasure to Gay. Like Darwin, who felt the tragic force of his discoveries, the playwright certainly wished that things were otherwise. But long experience had taught him that life could not be as he hoped. His dreams of a better world had given way to a pragmatic acceptance of this one, and so rather than reading like a satire, *The Beggar's Opera* functions more as an anatomy. It does not castigate its characters for their ignoble behaviors, but admits: this is what human nature really is.

Yet remarkably, *The Beggar's Opera* is not a gloomy play. In fact, it is an exuberant one. Partly, this is due to the Epicurean oblivion of the characters themselves. Drunk for most of his waking hours, Macheath cheerily greets his hangman with the observation that he can now forget about child support. But no less importantly, there is the form of the work itself: a rustic opera. Where earlier comedies had indulged in the occasional song, *The Beggar's Opera* bursts at the seams, exuberantly offering sixty-nine. Unlike a traditional opera, moreover, these songs were not highly wrought pieces of virtuoso composition. They were folk staples such as "The Bonny Grey-Eyed Morn," revealing a taste in music that aligned Gay once again with Epicurus. As Lucretius had observed, the Epicureans believed that one way to soothe our troubled minds was by listening to rustic music.[72] Inspired not by man-made conventions but by birdsong and the breeze, the melodies of the country could help us forget our dreamt-up problems and propel our bodies into careless dance.

Through its simple songs, *The Beggar's Opera* thus returns its audience to a precivilized indolence, and in Epicurean style, this deconstructive ethics has a populist result. In a world where humble tunes are prized above rich artifice, a beggar may compose an opera, and as befits a man of the people, the Beggar puts himself at their pleasure. It had been, he confesses, his intention to do "strict poetical justice," concluding the opera with a scene in which the characters are all hanged for their roguery (59). Acknowledging, however, that his audience wants things to "end happily," he tosses off their cares with one final song: "But think of this maxim, and put off your sorrow, / The wretch of today, may be happy tomorrow." This is an Epicurean sentiment of ancient comic pedigree,[73] and with it, *The Beggar's Opera* abandons utopian reform for a "happy" forgetfulness. To many modern scholars, this about-face ending has seemed a ruse—surely, Gay is being ironic here, intending his spectators to supply the wholesome morality that the beggar does not. And yet, Gay's practice indicates otherwise. By closing with a song, he sends his audience out

humming a popular tune, not mulling the supposed verities of right and wrong. Gay, moreover, was humming with them. He had spent much of his life trying to change necessity, but now he had found a peace in forgetting his ambitions. As he wrote to Swift: "*The Beggar's Opera* . . . is acted at the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields with such success that the playhouse has been crowded every night . . . As to any favours from great men, I am in the same state you left me, but I am a great deal happier, as I have no expectations."[74] What has at last made Gay happy is not the financial windfall of his opera or the favors of "great men." It is the letting go of his dreamt-up "expectations."

The Beggar's Opera inspired the same Epicurean attitude in America. Instead of greeting it as a satire that invited the exercise of moral judgment, many colonists saw Gay's characters as the image of themselves. That American audiences would have been moved to recognize their own condition in Macheath or even Filch is perhaps no surprise, but, extraordinarily, they could even see themselves in Peachum. As an editorial in the *Columbian Centinel* declared in defense of Alexander Hamilton's decision to take up a military commission, "An impartial reader would be glad to learn by what sort of conduct Mr. Hamilton is to escape the censure of certain critics. *What would you have a gentleman do?* says Peachum."[75] Here, the leading Federalist newspaper defends the foremost Federalist by aligning him with Peachum's justification for murder: "if business cannot be carried on without it, what would you have a gentleman do?" Without a hint of irony, Hamilton is celebrated as a man who is capable of killing when the times require it, for unlike the self-deceivers who dream of poetic justice, he shares Gay's acquaintance with the hard necessity of life.

At the same time as American audiences accepted Gay's clear-eyed pragmatism, they also embraced the relief of his rustic songs. It was not uncommon for these songs to be performed independently of the actual opera,[76] and the "Company of Comedians" who staged *The Beggar's Opera* for Washington and Jefferson promoted their revival of the opera by declaring that they had "collected some very eminent performers from both the theatres in London, *particularly in the Singing-Way*."[77] There can be no doubt, moreover, that Jefferson shared his countrymen's pleasure in Gay's simple compositions. He remarked to an acquaintance that music was a "respite from the cares of the day," and like Gay and Epicurus, Jefferson was especially partial to rustic melodies.[78] In 1769, after the notes of *The Beggar's Opera* had filled his ears, the Virginian set down his violin and purchased an Aeolian harp, forgetting his cares in the sound of the breeze.[79]

By the time that Jefferson came to write the Declaration, the New Comedies of his day had thus repeatedly guided him toward the carelessness of indolence. He had read the suggestion in *Every Man in his Humour* that he doff his cares like a cap, he had watched Mrs. Sullen enjoy her divorce, and he had sung the simple melodies of *The Beggar's Opera*. Moreover, he was impressed enough by these experiences to recommend them to others, giving *Every Man in his Humour* to his grandchildren, bequeathing his copy of *The Beaux Stratagem* to the University of Virginia, and urging his heirs to read Gay.[80] To be sure, Jefferson did not derive his view of happiness purely from comedy. As he himself acknowledged, he was directly aware of Epicurus's account. But prior to writing the Declaration, Jefferson had recommended the "Comic authors" as a model for legal rhetoric,[81] and as we have seen, these comics offered an approach to happiness that other contemporary interpretations of Epicurus did not. Where liberals such as Locke had adopted indolence without abandoning their pursuit of property, the most popularly acclaimed comedies of Epicurus's era and Jefferson's own rejected possession mongering. Menander shrugged off "property [χρημάτων]" as an "uncertain business" [ἀβεβαίου πράγματος]," Farquhar dryly observed that the reward of wealth was "taxes," and Gay offered *The Beggar's Opera* as a two-hour tour of the misery caused by the drive for acquisition.[82] These playwrights, in short, recognized what Locke had not: Epicureanism was incompatible with the pursuit of wealth. And so where Locke had gone no further than including "indolence" alongside "property," Jefferson joined with his favorite comedies to eliminate possession entirely.

When the Declaration was published, few of Jefferson's fellow colonists would have recognized that "the pursuit of happiness" involved a rejection of property that aligned their newfound independence with Epicurean comedy. Yet, because of the abnegative logic of Epicureanism, they did not need to. Epicurus, as we have seen, believed that the function of ethics was less to establish positive doctrines than to clear away ones that were interfering with people's tranquility, and by removing "property," this is exactly what Jefferson did. Many of his fellow delegates at the Second Continental Congress, after all, were wealthy men who felt that possessions were no less sacred than life or liberty. As John Adams nervously exclaimed, "Property is surely a right of mankind as really as liberty. Perhaps, at first, prejudice, habit, shame or fear, principle or religion, would restrain the poor from attacking the rich, and the idle from usurping on the industrious; but the time would not be long before courage and enterprise would come, and pretexts be invented by degrees, to

countenance the majority in dividing all the property among them, or at least, in sharing it equally with its present possessors."[83] Adams reveals here that he has no interest in equality. In fact, he fears and loathes the prospect, demanding that property be preserved against "courage and enterprise" through the full force of the law. When Jefferson quietly eliminated property as one of mankind's inalienable rights, he thus opened the door to Adams's nightmare: "a downright equal division of every thing."[84] And while this horror has yet to be realized, Jefferson might take some measure of satisfaction in knowing that subsequent generations have taxed the rich more heavily than the poor, producing a distribution of wealth that—while it falls very short of strict equality—is far greater than in the early American republic.[85]

By undercutting Adams's property-based model of government, Jefferson's turn to indolence adds another chapter to the power-busting narrative of comic *demokratia* that we have been exploring in this book. Where *impetuoso* and *imitatio* focus primarily on external obstacles to democracy—the tyrant princes and oligarchs who would enslave the people—indolence addresses an internal snag that compromised (and quite possibly doomed) ancient Athens. Using a populist, problem-solving materialism to do away with a plutocratic, goods-chasing materialism, Jefferson's revision of the Declaration banished the logic of acquisition that had led to the festering inequities of *demokratia*. Rich citizens could no longer claim to be more equal than poor, nor could male citizens assert that it was their natural prerogative to disenfranchise women, foreigners, and slaves. Instead, following Epicurus's ancient advice, the bodies of the public were freed from the artificial shackles of possession. Like the rhetorical techniques employed by Tom Paine's *Common Sense* and George Washington's farewell address, moreover, Jefferson's use of indolence accomplished this democratic end without requiring its audience to engage in conscious reform. Instead of encouraging critical reflection on the flaws and contradictions of ownership, the Declaration simply proceeded without a man-made source of misery, allowing America to continue obliviously without it too.

Jefferson's rhetorical trick did not, of course, instantly produce a level society. Men like Adams were unable to simply forget the existence of property, and Jefferson himself made no moves to enfranchise women or emancipate his slaves. Even without taking positive action, however, Jefferson's Epicurean revision made it easier for America to keep slipping indolently toward equality, and soon after the Revolution, the country found itself doing just this. In January 1784, Rhode Island issued "An Act authorizing the Manumission of

Negroes, and for the gradual Abolition of Slavery," in which it proclaimed, "Whereas all Men are by Nature free, and entitled to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, yet the holding Mankind in a State of Slavery, and as private Property [is a] Violation of the Rights and Privileges of the Subject."[86] The phrase "the pursuit of happiness" is hardly the focus of this proclamation—indeed, the act would be the same without it. Instead, the significance of these four words lies in what they have replaced. If all men were guaranteed "life, liberty, and property," then the act could not simply dismiss slavery as a violation of natural rights. After all, as the act itself observes, slaves are a kind of "Property," and so to emancipate them would be to contradict the Declaration. Holding true to the deconstructive logic of Epicurean indolence, Jefferson's formulation matters here not because of what it says but because of what it omits. By abandoning property, the Declaration gives slaveholders no justification for holding onto their own.

Over the next seventy-five years, this latent implication of "the pursuit of happiness" would become the most widespread secular justification for ending slavery in America. Where the Constitution tacitly accepted slavery through its "three-fifths compromise," Jefferson's formulation offered the hope that America could dissolve slavery without also dissolving its own legal foundation. Grabbing onto this hope, the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison used it to introduce his newspaper *The Liberator*: "Assenting to the 'self-evident truth' maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, 'that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,' I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population."[87] This same argument was repeated dozens of times by Frederick Douglass,[88] and as Douglass urged his countrymen to forget the ties of property, he looked forward to the day when he could do so too: "I shall forget for a moment that I ever was a slave. If I can forget it, I think I could move as a man among you."[89] As we will explore in chapter 6, Douglass was a proponent of comic antidotes to slavery, and though he could not bring himself to indulge too far in Jefferson's Epicurean cure while other men still lived in chains, he nonetheless felt its democratic force. For like the New Comics, Douglass had come to believe that property was misery, and the remedy was to let it go.

Quixotic Governance

The first volume of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* appeared in 1776, and befitting its revolutionary birthday, it proved a favorite of the rebel colonists. Making its way into a third of America's private libraries, it earned the praise of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Tom Paine.[1] In part, this enthusiasm for Gibbon's work was driven by the hope that Britain would soon go the way of Rome. As Gibbon himself put it, "The decline of the two empires, the Roman and the British, advances apace."[2] But this chapter will suggest that the colonists discovered more in Gibbon than a vision of Britain's demise. They also found a comic method for sustaining their own experiment in popular government. In *The Decline and Fall,* Gibbon traced Rome's collapse to its failure to prevent civic freedom from metastasizing into a mob rule that had strangled the public's healthy independence of mind. If subsequent free states wished to avoid a similar doom, they thus needed to stop the liberty of the majority from impinging on minorities, and to help develop such democratic self-restraint, Gibbon used his narrative to model a form of governance that came (by way of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*) from part 2 of *Don Quixote*. When the colonists turned to Gibbon's history, they were thus also turning to a comic method for regulating the raw freedom released by *impetuoso,* indolence, and the other populist techniques described in the preceding chapters. And though this method for protecting minorities sprang originally from the dreams of Cervantes's windmill-tilting don, I will show over the following pages that it guided the colonists to a real-world accomplishment, helping Mercy Otis Warren and America's other early federal historians promote a central government that kept the many from bullying the few.

When Cervantes's readers opened part 2 of *Don Quixote* (1615), they were

greeted by a subtle but important change in tone. While part 1 had been largely satiric, offering the don as a reductio ad absurdum of the behaviors counseled in chivalric romances, part 2 was informed by a comic sensibility that reflected Cervantes's recent turn toward the stage. Longing to be remembered not as an author of mock romances but as a respected playwright, Cervantes was particularly jealous of the theatrical achievements of his Spanish contemporary, Lope de Vega. De Vega's output was so prodigious (reputed at over a thousand plays) as to suggest a kind of spontaneous generation, but in his *Arte Nueva* (1607), the playwright revealed his secret recipe. Dismissing the philosophical "unities" of scholars, he declared that his success had come from imitating the psychological "variety [*variedad*]" of "ordinary folk [*el vulgo*]."[3] Far from discovering a special new ingredient, that is, de Vega had stuck with an ancient staple. Like the comic playwrights of yore, he had rejected the belief that there was one right way of thinking, instead seeing the good in the world's varied psychological humours.[4]

Arte Nueva appeared two years after part 1 of *Don Quixote,* at the very moment that Cervantes was turning his own attention to writing plays. In the end, these theater works did not garner the laurels of de Vega—indeed, they never made it to the stage. But while the would-be playwright failed to imitate de Vega's success, he did take after him in one key respect: he imbued his plots with comic pluralism. In *Pedro de Urdemalas,* Cervantes portrays a servant who possesses an "ingenuity [*ingenio*]" driven by his overactive powers of imagination: "I dream of becoming prince and pope, emperor and king, and my humour [*fantasia*] even reaches to owning the entire world."[5] This is an outrageous humour—more outrageous even than the one that grips Quixote—yet in *Pedro,* it is not held up for ridicule. Instead, it is portrayed as the source of an unexpected public good, enabling the servant to become an actor who enlivens "the grand comedy" of the stage.[6]

After Cervantes's own stage career failed and he returned somewhat grudgingly to writing *Don Quixote,* he retained this comic appreciation for the value of eccentricity. Early in part 2, the don is regaling a young poet with his usual chivalric nonsense when he unexpectedly dispenses a piece of solid counsel: "Be guided more by other people's opinions than your own."[7] This sage recommendation prompts a look of "wonder [*admiraron*]" from the listening poet, who is stunned that the don has somehow shaken off his lunacy. Yet as the narrative makes clear, Quixote has not really changed at all, for in the sentence prior to giving this advice, he has been discoursing on the need for knights to show humility. When the don urges the poet to attend modestly

to others, he is thus continuing to spout the language of his imaginary paladins, and so in keeping with the pluralist logic of comedy, this moment reveals that what seems like madness can in other contexts function as good sense.

From here, part 2 goes on to chronicle the public merits of Quixote's other knightly imaginations—celebrating his generosity, pertinacity, and self-sacrifice[8]—and it similarly rehabilitates the don's long-suffering sidekick, Sancho. In part 1, Sancho is endlessly ridiculed for being simple, but in part 2, he demonstrates the upside of his simplicity when he is appointed governor.[9] This appointment is a prank—the expectation is that Sancho will prove hilariously inept, and he ascends to his lofty position by reminding everyone of his lowly appetites: "Don't bring me any dainty food—my gut can only handle meat and onions."[10] As events reveal, however, Sancho's gut does not make him a bad leader, for it allows him to solve meat-and-onion puzzles that a more refined governor would not. When Sancho sniffs out a pair of dishonest tricksters, the assembled masses gape in "wonder [*admirados*]," and eventually, many of his pronouncements are adopted into law: "even today, his ordinances remain, known as 'The Constitutions of the great governor Sancho Panza.'"[11] This is not to say, of course, that Sancho emerges as an ideal ruler. He remains his usual risible self, baffled by the sophistry of his advisors, fainting at the thought of danger, and finally resigning his position with a relieved sigh. But his belly-driven logic does make its own distinct contribution to government, revealing that the don's faith in Sancho—"take pride in your humble lineage, and don't be ashamed to say you come from laborers"[12]—is not just a quixotic sentiment. It is common sense as well.

With these revised portraits of Sancho and Quixote, part 2 follows de Vega's comedies in exploring the social benefits of pluralism, but Cervantes did not simply retrace the steps of his great rival. Because *Don Quixote* was a novel, it allowed Cervantes to do something that de Vega's hundreds of plays had not: extend the logic of comic pluralism onto a narrator (or to use the term that the text itself employs, an "author") who, distinct from Cervantes himself, infuses the narrative with his own idiosyncratic character. In part 1, the author had literally been fractured into multiple parts—the mysterious Cide Hamete, the short-lived first translator, the reader of the first translation, the stranger hired to translate more[13]—but Cervantes's turn to comedy in part 2 prompted him to treat the author like his other characters, investing him with a consistent psychological humour that makes him worthy in his own strange way. This humour is revealed in the "Author's Preface," where, having rebuked

a counterfeiter for penning an illegitimate sequel, the author of part 2 abruptly confesses, "I myself know only too well that one of the greatest temptations of the devil is to make a man think that he can write a book that will bring him both money [*dineros*] and fame [*fama*]."[14] Here the author acknowledges that he has heard the siren lures of wealth and glory, and a few moments later, it becomes plain that he can hear them still. After declaring that he has buried Quixote to prevent any further sequels from appearing, the author then concludes: "too much of a good thing makes it less appetizing, while a little of something, even if it's bad, has a certain value. Oh, and I almost forgot—you can soon hope to see *Persiles,* which I'm finishing, and also part 2 of my *Galatea*."[15] Overwhelmed by his desire to be rich and famous, the author blurts out an advertisement for the works now gushing from his pen, forgetting his own wise observation—delivered just a sentence before—that successful writers make themselves scarce.

Like most literary hacks, the author of part 2 thus suffers from a humour for cash and celebrity that can make him seem a witless shill; and over the ensuing chapters, this humour leads him into yet greater absurdity, for it turns out that the paths to money and fame are not after all the same. Their divergence is noted in the printing office of chapter 62, where Quixote encounters a famous author who has nonetheless earned little coin. Disgruntled by this state of affairs, the author has decided to remove the middleman and become his own publisher, a plan greeted with open disbelief by Quixote. As the don observes, the only books that make money are those that heat the reader's blood with "racy [*picante*]" subjects while managing to steer clear of "open wickedness [*avieso*]." The public, in other words, jealously guards their cash until they find a tome that allows them to indulge in a fantasy that does not ruffle their sense of a greater truth, and so unless the author has somehow managed to write an unobjectionable romp, his self-publishing scheme is headed for bankruptcy. This is another of the don's moments of good sense, and yet its lesson is ignored not simply by the author he encounters but by the author of part 2 himself. Determined to write himself into both *dineros* and fame, the author splits himself across a contradiction. To continue the profitable recipe of part 1, he immerses his audience in the dream life of Quixote as he trots along the actual roads of La Mancha. Ingeniously, that is, the author achieves his own peculiar version of chapter 62's best-selling formula, dishing up a vivid fantasy that never violates his readers' sense of what is real. Yet for the author, this personal triumph is not enough. He wants to be more than rich. He wants to be famous as well, and to satisfy this second urge, he

must remind his readers that he is the one behind the fantasy they enjoy. No sooner has he crafted a moment of feeling or painted a picaresque scene than he interjects a metanarrative reminder of his own presence—"the author of this magnificent work . . . what the author means here . . . writing such crowd-pleasing pablum is incredibly boring for the author, blessed as he is with true literary genius"—barging into the story to announce himself.[16]

As in the preface, this pandering self-aggrandizement is frequently ridiculous, and it culminates in open lunacy. At the end of part 2, the don confesses his folly and dies in the arms of the Church, giving the author a prime opportunity to serve up the mix of moralizing and melodrama that leads to rampant book sales. Yet instead, the moment that the don expires, the author declares: "Seeing which, the priest asked the clerk to be his witness that Alonso Quixano the Good, popularly known as Don Quixote of La Mancha, had died a natural death; and the priest said he desired such testimony to stop any author other than the true author of this book from resuscitating him falsely, and manufacturing endless stories out of his exploits."[17] Barely allowing Quixote's death to register, the author crashes the funeral to announce his own financial copyright. Like an applause-hungry actor who leaps up with a bow the instant his death scene is done, he wants so badly to win credit for his performance that he tramples its sentimental climax.

Even as the author's humour for *la fama* has its absurd results, however, it also generates the other rhetorical effect that part 2 associates with eccentricity: wonder. For no less than the don's knightly virtues or Governor Sancho's frank simplicity, the author's urge to announce his presence has jaw-dropping results: his unprecedented similes,[18] his use of embedded narratives to create authorial doubles,[19] his introduction of part 1 as an actual book into the world of part 2,[20] and all of the other metanarrative gymnastics that have earned *Don Quixote* its reputation as an anticipation of modernity (and beyond). Like Sancho's Constitutions, this litany of innovation attests to the remarkable things that can come from humourous sources, and the author's interruption of Quixote's funeral continues his comic pattern of accomplishment by unexpectedly sounding the deepest literary note of all: the tragic. For Cervantes's audience, as for generations before, tragedy was associated with two rhetorical effects: pity and fear.[21] Pity was thought to be inspired by the sight of unfair suffering, and in part 2 of *Don Quixote,* it is increasingly urged by the narrative in response to the don's destruction.[22] Fear, meanwhile, was rooted in the audience's horrified realization that they were subject to the same forces that had destroyed the hero, and while Quixote's dementia is so

singular that it would seem impossible for his readers to suffer from it too, they are, in fact, already its oblivious victims. No less than the don, these readers have spent the length of part 2 in an escape to fantasy. Their fantasy is, to be sure, a slightly different one—while Quixote is envisioning the heroic escapades that he has read about in knightly romances, they have been imagining the don and his absurd doings in La Mancha. But though the content of the make-believe is different, the form is the same, for like Quixote, his readers have fled their quotidian lives for the pleasant dream life of a book.

For most of part 2, the novel's readers are allowed to ignore this formal parallel between themselves and the don, making the tragic mood one of simple pity for his folly. However, each time the author intrudes with a metanarrative reminder that *Don Quixote* is his own marvelous invention, the readers are subtly reminded that they, no less than the don, are dwelling in a literary illusion that they must someday leave. And so when the author boorishly interrupts Quixote's funeral by announcing that there will be no sequels, part 2 reaches its tragic apex. Snapping readers out of their bookish reverie, the author reveals that they have reached the last page of their make-believe, infusing their sympathy for Quixote's ended dreams with a jolt of trepidation at the ending of their own. In a final comic twist, the author has stumbled into conjuring the tragic mix of pity and fear that his contemporaries saw as the highest glory of the stage,[23] so that even as his humour renders him absurd, it propels him into snatching the laurels craved by Cervantes himself.

The influence of *Don Quixote* was tremendous, and it had a profound effect on the man who would become the most-copied English comic stylist of the eighteenth century: Henry Fielding.[24] As a young playwright, Fielding drafted a comedy called *Don Quixote in England* that portrayed the don ruining inns, rescuing imaginary damsels, and upsetting local elections, and when a (slightly) more mature Fielding penned *Joseph Andrews* in 1742, he appended the subtitle "Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, the Author of Don Quixote."[25] For all their debts to *Don Quixote,* however, these early works do not embrace the comic pluralism of part 2. Instead, they content themselves with the satiric method of part 1. *Don Quixote in England* is little more than a rambling series of jabs, while the "author" of *Joseph Andrews* is all nonsense, exclaiming of one of Fielding's enemies, "How artfully doth [he], by insinuating that he escaped being promoted to the highest stations in Church and State, teach us a contempt of worldly grandeur!"[26] In such moments, the narrator's psychological coherence dissolves into a running stream of pot shots, and throughout all of *Joseph Andrews,* there is really

only one consistent strain of comic pluralism: the simpleness of Parson Adams. Like Sancho's similar humour, this simplicity frequently renders the good parson ridiculous. After discovering that Peter Pounce has given him a carriage ride out of pity, Adams tries to preserve his dignity by flinging himself into a ditch (3.13). After hearing a man remark on the "vanity" of the wit who "is desirous to read you" his writings, Adams nods vigorously and rummages through his pockets for some writing that he is desirous to read (3.3). And after holding forth on the virtues of Stoicism, he receives bad news with a shriek of dismay (4.8). Yet in keeping with the logic of comedy, the parson's simplicity is also a source of public good. Because of it, Adams is not jaded or calculating. He is well intentioned and honest, and if he sometimes wears his heart too much on his sleeve, his passions are generally social ones: "Sir . . . my definition of charity is, a generous disposition to relieve the distressed" (3.13). Still, Fielding hardly needed to have read Cervantes to craft Adams. In Jonson and Plautus, Congreve and Terence, he had plenty of examples of characters whose root humour made them absurd but also worthy. What made *Don Quixote* distinctive was that it extended this comic psychology onto the "author" (or, to use the more technical term, the "narrator"),[27] and of this innovation, the writer of *Joseph Andrews* was oblivious.

By the time that Fielding sat down seven years later to write *Tom Jones* (1749), however, he had discovered Cervantes's comic narrator. And while it is hard to know exactly what stimulated this discovery, it is fittingly comic that Fielding's eyes appear to have been opened at least in part by an eccentric and unexpected source—indeed, a source so eccentric and unexpected that no modern scholar seems to have noticed it.[28] This source was William Petty's economic treatise *Political Arithmetic.* Fielding was an avid reader of Petty, remarking approvingly of "the height to which Sir William Petty in his *Political Arithmetic* thinks [trade] capable of being carried."[29] Petty, meanwhile, was an avid reader of Cervantes. Prior to writing *Political Arithmetic,* he had declared his intention to "read over Don Quixote once more,"[30] and he then went on to pattern the authorial persona of his treatise after the comic don of part 2. This was a highly unusual narrative model for a work of financial policy, but it reflected Petty's awareness of the peculiar, even quixotic, nature of his views.[31] Rejecting the traditional economic policies of wealthy Britons —land grabbing, xenophobia, disregard for the lower classes[32]—*Political Arithmetic* set forth a program that has since become a basis for progressive democracy: encouraging immigration, welcoming foreign investment, and providing social welfare for the disadvantaged.[33]

Behind all of these unconventional ideas lay a belief in the general economic value of heterodox opinions.[34] As Petty observed, "Trade is most vigorously carried on, in every State and Government, by the Heterodox part of the same, and such as profess Opinions different from what are publickly established."[35] In support of this claim, Petty offered an extraordinary list:

> in India where the Mahometan Religion is Authorized, there the Banians are the most considerable Merchants. In the Turkish Empire the Jews, and Christians. At Venice, Naples, Legorn, Genoua, and Lisbone, Jews, and Non-Papist Merchant-Strangers: but to be short, in that part of Europe, where the Roman Catholick Religion now hath, or lately hath had Establishment; there three quarters of the whole Trade, is in the hands of such as have separated from the Church . . . Nor is it to be denied but that in Ireland, where the said Roman Religion is not Authorized, there the Professors thereof have a great part of the Trade (25–26).

Here, Petty claims that the best merchants are always those who are in the minority. In Christian societies, the best merchants are Jews; in Islamic societies, Christians; in Protestant ones, Catholics; in Catholic ones, Protestants. While many English Whigs had drawn a connection between trade and so-called dissenters, Petty therefore went much further. He did not simply associate financial prosperity with evangelical Protestants; he suggested that any kind of dissent was an economic good: "Trade is not fixt to any Species of Religion as such; but rather as before hath been said to the Heterodox part of the whole" (26). And so where many of Petty's contemporaries had argued for tolerance on philosophical grounds—claiming, for example, that freedom of religion was a natural right—Petty defended it for a thoroughly pragmatic reason: it was conducive to national prosperity.

To further invest *Political Arithmetic* with this practical heterodoxy, Petty turned to the narrative model of *Don Quixote.* Dismissing the traditional view of land as the primary source of national wealth, the "author" of *Political Arithmetic* interrupts his mathematical arguments to indulge in "a Dream or Revery" (65) in which he witnesses a French invasion of Ireland that makes England "more Rich and Strong" (65). After a moment, the author hauls himself back to reality, apologizing for "the Distemper of my own mind in this point [which] carries me to dream." But unable to restrain his distempered thoughts, he then pivots right back into his humour: "If Ingenious and Learned Men (among whom I reckon Sir Tho. More, and Des Cartes) have disputed, That we who think our selves awake, are or may be really in a Dream; and

since the greatest absurdities of Dreams, are but a Preposterous and Tumultuary contexture of realities; I will crave the umbrage of these great Men last named, to say something for this wild conception, with submission to the better judgment of all those that can prove themselves awake" (66–67). In this remarkable passage, the author cites Thomas Moore and Descartes as evidence that we might all be dreaming—leading him to declare that he will only abandon his own "wild" ideas if his critics "can prove themselves awake." Surely, a more bizarre defense of an economic policy has never been mounted, for the author is suggesting that the ultimate justification for his reappraisal of land is that none of us can mathematically demonstrate that our eyes are more open than his.

Like Cervantes, Petty thus imbues his authorial persona with such a strong psychological humour that it transports him into waking dreams, and as in part 2 of *Don Quixote,* this rhetorical mingling of the inspired and the addled has a pluralist result. While prompting readers to keep an amused distance from the author, it also encourages them to feel a sense of wonder at the epiphanies that can spring from eccentricity, and among Petty's many surprised but admiring readers was Fielding.[36] Fielding praised *Political Arithmetic* as an "excellent Work" and drank it in so deeply as to learn its statistical method for estimating the young children in Middlesex: "According to this computation, if the people in Middlesex amount to 1,200,000, the impotent poor will be 2,400; the expense of maintaining which number will be £13,600. The above excellent author [i.e., William Petty] estimates the children under seven years of age at the rate of one fourth of the people: these then according to my estimate in Middlesex will be 300,000."[37] Having imbibed Petty's fiscal logic, Fielding then copied Petty's economically humoured narrator in his own seriocomic public guide, *The True Patriot.* This was a newspaper that circulated in 1745–46 as a response to the Jacobite rebellion, yet rather than offering grave political counsel, its first issue began with the "author" offering a lengthy financial analysis of the value of his paper: "I shall contain, [my bookseller] says, full three times as many letters as [three halfpence] papers; and for which reason he at first advised me to demand fourpence at least, for that one-ninth part would be still abated to the Public."[38] In one sense, this argument is perfectly logical. If the words in a regular newspaper are worth three halfpence, and if *The True Patriot* contains thrice as many words, then it contains nine half-pence worth, or four and a half pence. The publisher could therefore reasonably charge "fourpence" and still give his customers a bonus of a half pence (or "one-ninth part"). But in another sense, this argu-

ment is peculiar: only a frank materialist would calculate the value of a newspaper strictly by its quantity of words. To most readers, the quality of its content would also be significant (indeed, quite likely *more* significant). In a myopic emulation of Petty's narrator—who disowns "superlative Words, and intellectual Arguments" in favor of the logic "of Number, Weight, or Measure"—Fielding's newspaperman has reduced all literature to math.[39]

Yet in the same way that this economic reductionism leads Petty's author into surprising insights, so too does Fielding's word-counting writer make an unexpected contribution to the greater good. Summing up the value of his newspaper, the writer declares, "I shall conclude the whole in the words of the fair and honest tradesman: Gentlemen, upon my word and honour, I can afford it no cheaper; and I believe there is no shop in town will use you better for the price" (3:288). By promising that no shop will "use" its readers better, the author acknowledges that his humour leads him to see the public strictly as a source of personal gain. But in the same breath, he reveals that this humour also has its public upside: it prompts the author to underbid his rivals, giving the reader the best price that material conditions will allow. Although there is something crass about the marketplace—it is unsentimental about human relations and uninterested in the quality of literary productions—it thus also has its own particular civic yield. Forcing the tradesman to be "fair and honest" if he wishes to turn a profit, it leads to a kind of social virtue.

The public benefits and follies of this mercantile humour are plumbed further in subsequent issues of the newspaper that are written by a "haberdasher" who believes "That there is no real value in anything but money" (3:318). Reaching the absolute limit of economic reductionism, Fielding's author now distills all life to pounds and pence, culminating in the outlandish: "I shall proceed to acquaint you with my conduct concerning those things which some silly people call valuable, such as reputation, virtue, sense, beauty &c" (3:319). Yet even as Fielding's narrative persona exposes himself here to satiric ridicule, he does not dissolve into total ridiculousness. Once again, his humour has a comic end, allowing him to perceive the antisocial consequences of refusing to lend money in "the defense of the public" (3:322). As the author observes: "upon the nearest computation I could make with my pen . . . I find this very person who proposed to gain 1 *per cent*. in 20,000*l*., would, by the consequential effect on the public credit, be a clear loser of 2½" (3:322). A patriotic rejection of the Jacobite cause is, in short, sensible business, and so though the author dismisses those "foolish people" who show "loyalty to their king" or "zeal for their country," his economic humour leads him round to

their same conclusion: the public good is worth defending (3:322). Like Petty, who supports public welfare for orphans not because it is good Christian charity but because it is good economic sense, Fielding's money-eyed tradesman has arrived at the national interest through a consideration of his own pocketbook, displaying the unexpected civic virtue of a personal eccentricity.

After the Jacobite uprising ended in April 1746, Fielding abandoned *The True Patriot,* but he did not abandon its quixotic narrator. Instead, now that England's external borders were secure, he put this narrator to work on what he saw as the greatest internal challenge to national prosperity: the mob rule encouraged by trade. Like Petty, Fielding viewed trade as a public boon. It had enriched the nation and given its citizens access to French paper, Italian silks, and Portuguese sweets. But Fielding was nonetheless disturbed by what he perceived as the downside of commerce: a growth in public freedom that threatened to cannibalize itself.[40] As Fielding noted, the increased prosperity brought by trade had given the working classes enough disposable income to turn down work, freeing them from the thumb of the landed gentry.[41] And while Fielding by no means saw the gentry as paragons of social virtue, he worried that the brushing off of their restraining hand had left the working classes without check or balance, opening the door to a tyranny of the majority, or mob rule. In this nightmare scenario, the majority used its freedom to act out its reactionary beliefs and petty prejudices, and while serving as a public magistrate in the late 1740s and early 1750s, Fielding witnessed a number of disturbing incidents in which London mobs physically terrorized minorities.

Fielding's concern for the safety of these minorities was fundamentally self-interested. Like Petty, he saw them as the source of public wealth, and his main focus was on well-to-do minorities such as himself. Yet as the American Founding Fathers were to discover a few decades later, this self-involved view of "the few" led in practice to the protection of economically disadvantaged minorities as well. So it was that Fielding, in his capacity as magistrate, harshly condemned an act of mob justice inflicted on the workers of a London brothel.[42] For defending the brothel's "Venereal" women, Fielding was branded by social conservatives as a "Fiend" who had used "his Cloven Foot" to protect "filthy Receptacles of Vice" (166). Stung, the author justified himself by insisting, "The Cry against Bawdy-Houses might have been easily converted into an Out-cry of a very different Nature, and Goldsmiths might have been considered to be as great a Nuisance to the Public as Whores."[43] Fielding, that is, insisted he had no personal stake in protecting prostitutes. His real

objective in restraining the tyrant majority was to ensure that it did not take it upon itself to assault "Goldsmiths" and other "good" minorities who supported the nation's trade. And yet even as Fielding protested his disdain for the lowly females of the street, his refusal to retreat from his original judgment revealed that he accepted his practical obligation to defend them. To maintain England's economic prosperity, it was necessary to maintain its social heterodoxy, and to maintain its social heterodoxy, it was necessary to protect minorities in general from the mob.[44]

To give minorities such protection, Fielding called for regulatory oversight of popular power, anticipating modern democracies that have been driven by their citizens' libertarian excesses to do the same. And while Fielding's legislative proposals for restraining the majority failed to gain much traction, his comic writings of the late 1740s managed to advance a more enduring solution: a culture of self-regulation rooted in what he referred to as "morality." Fielding's emphasis on morality has often seemed to mark him as a political reactionary,[45] but his rather more plastic approach to public virtue can be discerned in the preface to his wide-ranging pamphlet, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751). In this singular piece of freethinking, Fielding notes that trade inevitably introduces "moral Evils," and yet instead of condemning England's market economy, he insists that an uptick in sin is an acceptable price to pay for an increased quality of "human Life" (xxiv). Fielding, in other words, openly privileges men's fleshly happiness over their future salvation, leading him to argue that the appropriate way to deal with immorality is to "restrain and palliate [its] evil Consequences" through the use of "Art" (xxv). Bypassing churches, holy commandments, and the matter of men's souls, *An Enquiry* puts its faith in laws and other behavioral restraints, claiming them as the most effective tools for promoting social virtue.

To drive home this pragmatic view of morality, Fielding closes his preface with an extended quote from Conyers Middleton:

> this remote country [i.e., England], anciently the jest and contempt of the polite Romans, is become the happy seat of liberty, plenty, and letters; flourishing in all the arts and refinements of civil life; yet running perhaps, the same course, which Rome itself had run before it; from virtuous industry to wealth; from wealth to luxury; from luxury to an impatience of discipline and corruption of morals; till, by a total degeneracy and loss of virtue, being grown ripe for destruction, it falls a prey at last to some hardy oppressor, and, with the loss

> of liberty, losing every thing else that is valuable, sinks gradually again into its original barbarism.[46]

This lament about the "corruption of morals" sounds pious enough, but three years prior to Fielding's treatise, Middleton had been accused of atheism for publishing a critique of miracles.[47] And whether or not Middleton truly doubted the existence of God, the passage that Fielding chooses to cite is one in which Middleton airs his Machiavellian view of the Roman Republic's state religion.[48] Following the Florentine, Middleton argues here that when the civic authority of the Roman gods waned, the liberty of the people tipped into license, until popular power became mob rule and, finally, the literal despotism of the emperors. The lesson of Rome, as Machiavelli and Middleton see it, is thus twofold. First, individual freedom needs to be regulated—otherwise, the strong overrun the weak, turning tyrant and destroying the economic fruits of liberty. Second, this regulation can be practically achieved through public myths that convince the mob that if they check their selfish appetites, the heavens will reward their country with prosperity.

Like Middleton (and like Machiavelli too), Fielding nowhere implies that this pragmatic view of morality applies to Christianity. If he was a believer, such a claim would have been unthinkable, and if he was not, it would have been impractical. Yet by citing Middleton, Fielding reveals that he did not see laws and government regulations as the only forms of "Art" that could nurture public morals. He felt that myths and other cultural fictions could be effective too,[49] and thanks to his comic imitations of Cervantes and Petty, he did not have to look far for a fictional method for reining in the majority: eccentric narration. Like the religious myths of Rome, the quixotic narrator of *The True Patriot* provided regulation without suppressing liberty, promoting individual difference though the same two affective pathways as Cervantes's humour-driven author. First, he inspired wonder at his strange and unexpected achievements, encouraging a restrained tolerance for minority habits of mind. Second, he stirred mirth at his ridiculousness, limiting his own authority and foreclosing the possibility that he could be installed as a tyrant himself.

After *The True Patriot,* Fielding continued to develop this rhetorical method of governance, and three years later, he would make it into the spine of his wildly successful novel *Tom Jones*.[50] Like Fielding's economic papers, *Tom Jones* frets about the freedom-killing effects of prosperity, holding up Squire Western as a grim example of how wealth can burst the social restraints that

stop one person from tyrannizing another. Western, the "author" remarks, "knew the just value and only use of money, viz., to lay it up. He was likewise well skilled in the exact value of reversions, expectations, &c., and had often considered the amount of his sister's fortune, and the chance which he or his posterity had of inheriting it."[51] The squire, in short, is gripped whole by the logic of currency, and to gain the prize of his "sister's fortune," he informs his daughter Sophia that she must marry into it. When she resists, the squire incarcerates her, prompting the author to observe, "Western beheld the deplorable condition of his daughter with . . . the same emotions which arise in an honest fair tradesman, who sees his debtor dragged to prison for £10" (16.2). Here, the "honest fair tradesman" reappears from the pages of *The True Patriot,* but the emphasis now falls on the socially destructive effects of his economic reductionism. What had, in the context of the Jacobite rebellion, seemed a practical (if imperfect) good has swelled into a public danger.

As *Tom Jones* makes clear, moreover, this danger is so great that it has even cracked the restraint that once saved Rome: the state religion. For when Western's parson objects to Sophia's imprisonment, it simply provokes Western "into many indecent reflections on the whole body of the clergy, which we have too great an honour for that sacred function to commit to paper" (16.1). Although the author of *Tom Jones* refuses to impugn the clergy directly, claiming that he wishes to preserve their reputation by not writing Western's verbal abuses into the public record, the novel itself thus follows Middleton in discretely observing that the church has not managed to rein in the strong. For the practical safety of minorities, another source of morality must be found.

Fielding's author proposes a number of potential candidates. One is a revival of "innocence" (4.2). Another is "reflection on . . . past follies" (18.13). A third is simply "mirth" (12.12). And a fourth is the "wisdom" found in Allworthy's "maxim . . . not to buy at too dear a price" (4.3). Taken individually, each of these solutions seems promising, yet, as scholars have noted, when they are considered together, they reveal a collection of different (in fact, potentially conflicting) methods. Innocence is spontaneous, while "reflection" is not; wisdom is measured, mirth hardly so. This apparent inconsistency has at times led *Tom Jones* to be taxed as a muddled piece of writing,[52] but while it is true that no existing moral logic binds the novel's suggestions, they nevertheless spring organically from a single rhetorical source: the author's *ethos*. The ancient orators associated *ethos* with the speaker's "character" or "humour,"[53] and in keeping with their general em-

phasis on pluralism, they believed that this humour could incorporate unusual and even eccentric elements.[54] So committed is the author of *Tom Jones* to his own eccentric ethos, moreover, that he follows the most infamous early modern student of rhetoric—Machiavelli—in using it to authorize wholesale civic reform. As he announces at the beginning of the novel: "I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein" (1.1). Echoing Machiavelli's description of an innovator, "the Founder of a Commonwealth . . . [who takes] the power into his single hands . . . [to] introduce what Forms of Government [he] please[s],"[55] the author declares his intention to base an entire new commonwealth of "laws" on his own independent humour.[56] Like Sancho's Constitutions, the public mores of *Tom Jones* will be founded on an individual's gut beliefs.

And indeed, as the author goes on to reveal, so individual are these beliefs that they cannot be reduced to any familiar moral logic.[57] Instead, they embody the startling heterodoxy championed in *Political Arithmetic* and *The True Patriot*: looking out on the same world as everyone else, the author sees it in a way that is enlighteningly askew. In response to the "vulgar . . . opinion" that the wealthy are debauched by "lewdness," the author asserts, "I am convinced there never was less of love intrigue carried on among persons of condition than now" (14.1). To explain this contrarian remark, he then pivots in an even more unexpected direction, offering an unorthodox portrait of the chaste beau monde: "Our present women have been taught by their mothers to fix their thoughts only on ambition and vanity, and to despise the pleasures of love as unworthy their regard; and being afterwards, by the care of such mothers, married without having husbands, they seem pretty well confirmed in the justness of those sentiments; whence they content themselves, for the dull remainder of life, with the pursuit of more innocent, but I am afraid more childish amusements . . . the only epithet which it deserves is that of frivolous" (14.1). The author, that is, perceives that the rich are not guilty of the error that everyone assumes—because the rich are instead guilty of another error. The author may be right about this, or he might not, but either way, his assessment is intriguing because it avoids the familiar moral frameworks of his peers. Serious enough to be worthy of consideration but eccentric enough to be possibly unbalanced, it reveals us to be in the presence of someone who has thought deeply and differently about a matter that the rest of the world has skated by.

And so it is that the author of *Tom Jones* bursts with strange epiphanies. He notes that the dull can be made to seem more interesting by interspersing it

with moments of the "duller and dullest" (5.1). He condones plagiarizing from the ancient dead, but insists that to steal from living authors is to "defraud . . . the poor" (12.1). And he muses that on certain occasions, "to lie is not only excusable but commendable" (13.12). As more and more of these unconventional ideas fall out, the author makes good on his claim to be founding his own Constitution, wrapping himself in the peculiar gravity that, as Machiavelli had observed, comes to attend on moral innovators. Reinforcing the Machiavellian effect of the author's innovations, moreover, is their comic delivery. Because the Florentine recognized that innovation could easily congeal into demagoguery, he took pains to insist that innovators must in time "transfer" their powers to the "many," for only a "diversity of opinions" could sustain the commonwealth in the long run (280). After an innovator had set up his new commandments, he thus needed to relinquish his authority, and in keeping with this pragmatic model of governance, Fielding's author reveals not just his maverick brilliance but his humourous shortcomings. He lacks omniscience: "I *believe* it never once occurred" (18.2; emphasis added). He gets overwhelmed by his responsibilities: "we almost despair of bringing him to any good" (17.1). He admits to being swayed by his bodily constitution: "I am not of . . . The Tragic Complexion" (17.1).[58] He concedes that he can seem absurd: "the reader cannot laugh once through the whole chapter, unless peradventure he should laugh at the author" (1.7). And so, like the meat-and-onions reign of governor Sancho, the author of *Tom Jones* works to promote minority perspectives through a twofold rhetorical action: stimulating wonder at the public worth of idiosyncrasy while simultaneously provoking a comic amusement that limits his authority before it can blossom into a demagogic cult of personality.

This eccentric approach to governance, as the author himself anticipated, was lost on most eighteenth-century critics. Some saw the novel simply as an inducement to vice. So traumatized was Samuel Johnson that he forgot his usual vocabular dexterity, able only to splutter that *Tom Jones* was the work of a "blockhead."[59] Others, meanwhile, saw it no less simplistically as a traditional moral corrective: "the Satyre . . . severe; / Deform'd and odious makes all Vice appear."[60] But even as the crude categories of eighteenth-century moral theory failed to capture Fielding's rhetorical innovation, it endured in democratic practice through the work of Edward Gibbon. Gibbon was enormously enthusiastic about the man he called "our immortal Fielding," remarking that, "the Romance of *Tom Jones,* that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Estuarial and the Imperial Eagle of the

house of Austria . . . [which together] have threatened the liberty of the old and invaded the treasures of the new World."[61] In this suitably eccentric panegyric, Gibbon juxtaposes *Tom Jones* against a pair of imperial incursions on "liberty" and "treasure," concluding that it will survive them both, and his belief in the material benefits of Fielding's liberty-friendly approach led him to use the comic method of *Tom Jones* in his own *The History of the Decline and Fall*. Because Gibbon presents himself as a more serious historian than the author of "The History" of *Tom Jones,* he is less exuberant in this method than Fielding. There are no fever-dreams in *The Decline and Fall,* no wild distempers of mind, no absurdly humorous digressions. And indeed, the whole emphasis of the comedy is shifted. Where Fielding plays up the idiosyncrasy of his narrative, only to surprise his readers with the discovery that it is publicly reasonable, Gibbon plays up the public reasonableness of his narrative, only to surprise his readers with the discovery that it is idiosyncratic.[62] Yet in one key respect, the effect of these different methods is the same. Demonstrating that there can be a good deal of sense in the heterodox, both narratives disrupt the bias of the majority without installing themselves as a new authority, promoting a civic liberty that values social minorities.

Gibbon lightly acknowledges the comic quality of his narrative in the peculiar little postscript that he appends to the final preface of *The Decline and Fall*:

> P. S. I shall embrace this opportunity of introducing two verbal remarks, which have not conveniently offered themselves to my notice. 1. As often as I use the definitions of beyond the Alps, the Rhine, the Danube, &c., I generally suppose myself at Rome, and afterwards at Constantinople; without observing whether this relative geography may agree with the local, but variable, situation of the reader, or the historian. 2. In proper names of foreign, and especially of Oriental origin, it should be always our aim to express, in our English version, a faithful copy of the original. But this rule, which is founded on a just regard to uniformity and truth, must often be relaxed; and the exceptions will be limited or enlarged by the custom of the language and the taste of the interpreter.[63]

Like the author of part 2 of *Don Quixote,* Gibbon's historian thus ends his preface with a sudden personal swerve. First, he notes that while writing *The Decline and Fall,* it has been his habit to "suppose" himself at Rome, forgetting his actual location in his vision of another time and place. This is hardly on the order of the waking dream of Petty's heterodox economist or the chivalric fantasies of Cervantes's don, yet it is a kind of delusion nonetheless, and the

historian then promptly cops to a second eccentricity. Acknowledging that in the case of foreign names, he has "relaxed" his strict regard for "uniformity and truth" in order to follow his own personal "taste," he wraps up the postscript by asserting: "I can feel, where I cannot explain, the motives of my choice" (x). Here, more delicately expressed but no less deeply meant, is the sentiment of the author of *Tom Jones* when he declares himself "a better judge than any pitiful critic whatever" (1.2). Denying the need to "explain" his choices, he knows that they are justified because his own inclinations tell him so.

Neither of these small concessions is fatal to the historian's claim to have written a reliable narrative, but they hint at a subtle humour in his mind, an impression stitched into *The Decline and Fall* as a whole through stylistic imitations of *Tom Jones*. Gibbon's debt to Fielding has been noted by other scholars,[64] and so rather than providing an exhaustive accounting, I will focus on some examples that have previously escaped notice. Like Fielding, Gibbon uses "probably" dozens of times, lending an air of reasonable, yet limited, authority to his narrative. Like Fielding, he interjects the present tense to create a sense of the narrator's personal immediacy.[65] Like Fielding, he employs gentled imperatives to encourage his audience to follow his narrative after it has lost its footing: "let us attempt"; "let us try."[66] And like Fielding, he uses the first-person plural deontic modal to imply constraint by a greater narrative force: "we must supply"; "we must now convey."[67]

In addition to such subtle techniques, moreover, Gibbon's historian also copies several of the more overt formal strategies of *Tom Jones*. He uses the third-person epistemic modal "we may" to encourage the reader to entertain unorthodox conclusions: "And hence . . . we may very fairly draw an argument" (*Tom Jones*), "From thence we may fairly infer" (*The Decline and Fall*).[68] He insists that while his history has a greater "purpose," he retains his personal freedom to digress.[69] And he makes room for heterodox claims by insisting that he is not building a theological system but simply relating historical evidence. In *Tom Jones*: "But so matters fell out, and so I must relate them; and if any reader is shocked at their appearing unnatural, I cannot help it. I must remind such persons that I am not writing a system, but a history, and I am not obliged to reconcile every matter to the received notions concerning truth and nature" (12.8). In Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall*: "The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from heaven, arrayed in her native purity; a more melancholy duty is imposed upon the historian:—he must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth" (450).

Fielding, as we have seen, used these narrative techniques to recreate the affective function of the old civic gods of Rome, and in Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall,* they work to identical effect. Like Fielding, Gibbon believed that the lesson of Rome's collapse was that freedom generated a rise in public wealth that could easily degenerate into libertarian excess, mob rule, and, finally, open tyranny.[70] And also like Fielding, Gibbon believed that the Roman Republic had been able to restrain the bullying tendencies of the majority through the practical qualities of its state religion. As Gibbon noted, although this religion took "as the firmest bond of society, the useful persuasion, that, either in this or in a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods,"[71] it did not crush out personal freedom: "whilst [the Romans] acknowledged the general advantages of religion, they were convinced that the various modes of worship contributed alike to the same salutary purposes and that in every country the form of superstition which had received the sanction of time and experience was the best adapted to the climate and to its inhabitants" (33). The polytheistic myths of Rome were, in effect, enforced with enough public severity to check the growth of personal self-interest, yet idiosyncratic enough to allow for "heterodoxy,"[72] so that religion staved off mob rule without feeding tyranny. And while Gibbon despaired of a similar public role for the "submissive" doctrines of Christian monotheism,[73] the narrative form of *The Decline and Fall* reveals his hopes for another ancient source of civic morals: comedy. To most of Gibbon's readers, the notion that comedy could function as a state religion would have seemed a delusion worthy of Cervantes's don, and yet as we saw in chapter 1, the comic stage had managed to pull off just such a performance in democratic Athens. The innovations of *Tom Jones* had demonstrated to Gibbon, moreover, that comedy permitted a particularly liberty-friendly approach to public mores. Like the plural gods of Rome, comic narrators could encourage a sense of wonder that stopped short of submissive veneration, inspiring respect but not conformity. And so when Gibbon's historian translated what he called the "immortal" example of *Tom Jones* into his own subtly humourous style, he reinstituted the ancients' faith in comedy with a modern twist, offering his readers a way to witness the loss of Roman independence while practically strengthening their own.

The first volume of Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall* was published five months before the Declaration of Independence, and its "style and rationale" had a profound impact on the American historians who chronicled the Revolution.[74] Initially, these historians confined their attention to individual

geographical regions,[75] but following the adoption of the Constitution in 1787, they came to feel the need for an overarching national narrative. Even as they moved to tie America's history together, however, they recognized that this narrative could not be too uniform. The source of the nation's prosperity, most of its citizens agreed, was its incredible pluralism, for its regional diversity and individualistic ethos had produced a rich and dynamic economy. While some form of federal regulation was required to protect its stronger parts from bullying the weaker, too much regulation would thus kill the variation that had made the young country thrive. Given these concerns, it is easy to see why Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* appealed to America's first federal historians. Although its narrator was a little too monarchical for their tastes,[76] he nevertheless modeled a social restraint that protected (and, indeed, nurtured) unorthodox perspectives, providing a helpful model for the task their own federal government was about to undertake.

The first of America's federal historians, and by far the most eccentric, was William Gordon. In 1788, Gordon published a history of the Revolution—weirdly structured as a series of personal letters between a long-winded American gentleman and a tepid European correspondent—that he grandly titled *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America*. To most of posterity, this nod to Gibbon in the title has seemed semi-farcical. In his own time, Gordon was perceived as dangerously imbalanced—so violently did he quarrel with John Hancock, Alexander Hamilton, and even George Washington that he was forced to flee to England.[77] And more recently, Gordon's reputation has been destroyed by the discovery that he plagiarized gigantic portions of *The History.*[78] True to his title, however, when Gordon does write his own sentences (in the early pages of *The History,* before he lost his enthusiasm, and in a number of later passages that concern events near his residence in Boston, where even he did not find it too onerous to engage in personal research), he employs many of the narrative techniques that Gibbon had himself found in *Tom Jones*. Like Gibbon and Fielding, Gordon injects "probably" dozens of times, pivots into the present tense, uses gentled imperatives, and employs the first-person plural deontic modal.[79] Like them, he poses rhetorical questions, inviting his audience to agree where he knows that he cannot force their assent.[80] And like Gibbon, he draws on one of Fielding's favorite phrases for promoting a rational restraint: "It is no wonder that . . . "[81]

Through these narrative devices, Gordon continues Gibbon's method of establishing the limited governing force of a reasonable heterodoxy, and in a

few cases, Gordon hurries past Gibbon and plunges into the distinctly Fieldingesque. Of the massacre at Lexington, *The History* relates:

> Three or four were killed upon the green; the rest, making the whole number of the slain eight, were shot on the other side of the walls and fences, over which they had fled in order to escape. During this interesting period, Messrs. S. Adams and Hancock, whose residence was near at hand, quitted and removed to a further distance. While walking alone, Mr. Adams exclaimed, "*O what a glorious morning is this!*" in the belief that it would eventually liberate the colony from all subjection to Great Britain. His companion did not penetrate his meaning and thought the allusion was only to the aspect of the sky. (1.311)

What other historian would include this farcical exchange between Adams and Hancock alongside the noble slain of Lexington? As one of Gordon's appalled neighbors complained, "Many people here are offended by different parts of that work . . . There are many things which are below the dignity of history to notice."[82] Such undignified curiosities lend *The History* a distinctly humour-driven quality that is deepened further by its epistolary form. John Adams claimed that Gordon was forced into this odd format by his publisher, who, fearing that "the style was so bold it would damn the work,"[83] preferred to have it cloaked with a literary veneer. Gordon, meanwhile, insisted that he did it voluntarily to give his narrative the immediacy of a "well-executed historical painting."[84] But either way, the effect is the same. By presenting itself as a series of private letters, *The History* is framed as a set of personal impressions, worthy of consideration but not passive assent.

One year after Gordon's work appeared, David Ramsay published his own *The History of the American Revolution* (1789). Like Gordon, Ramsay plagiarized heavily from *The Annual Register* (and often from Gordon as well).[85] While this renders Ramsay's content suspect, however, it highlights his formal debt to Gibbon,[86] for, having reduced the ornate neoclassical rhetoric of the *Register* into a plain-speaking style,[87] Ramsay further enhances his narrative's air of limited authority by imitating *The Decline and Fall*.[88] Ramsay's stylistic debt to Gibbon has been traced in recent scholarship,[89] but one revealing borrowing has gone unnoticed: Ramsay follows Gibbon's historian in calling attention to the artificial boundaries of his narrative. As Gibbon's historian had observed, there was in nature no starting point of the Roman Empire, nor any god-given delineation of the physical events that comprised the empire and those that did not. Such distinctions were forged by the judgment

of the historian, a fact that Gibbon's *History* marks with formulations like, "Diocletian *may be considered* as the founder of a new empire" or (more daringly heterodox) "A candid but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity *may be considered* as a very essential part of the history of the Roman empire."[90] Ramsay uses this same technique, indeed its very language, writing, "The battle of Eutaw *may be considered* as closing the national war in South-Carolina" and "The loss of his army *may be considered* as the closing scene of the continental war in North America."[91] In offering these reasonable but debatable narrative markers, moreover, both historians were again following the steps of *Tom Jones.* Playfully, yet no less pointedly, Fielding's author had employed the very same grammatical construction to draw attention to the way that narrative manufactures history: "we warn thee not too hastily to condemn any of the incidents in this our history as impertinent and foreign to our main design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what manner such incident may conduce to that design. This work *may,* indeed, *be considered* as a great creation of our own" (10.1). While Ramsay was not as eccentric in his narrative style as William Gordon, the debt to Gibbon (and even to Fielding) was there. History, he acknowledged, was not absolute but the product of an individual mind.

Finally, some seventeen years after Ramsay, Mercy Otis Warren published the last of this first generation of federal histories: *History of The Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805).[92] Warren was more concerned than Gordon and Ramsay with states' rights, and true to this pluralist commitment, hers is the most comic of the early federal histories, not just taking its lead from Gibbon's heterodox historian but exuberantly surpassing him. At first glance, Warren would appear an unlikely writer of eccentric narratives.[93] Despite invoking Gibbon in her title and praising his "fascinating pen," she rejects his account of Christianity and declares her belief in "a superintending Providence."[94] Yet even as this gesture toward the theological absolute would necessarily seem to divorce Warren from the Englishman's reasonable but limited style, her *History* goes on to offer a version of Christianity that echoes Gibbon's own religious pragmatism. Crediting public worship of "the Divine Economist" for checking "the unbridled luxury of wealth" that promotes tyranny, the author sums up her view of a Christian America by declaring, "The people should be economical and sober; and the clergy should keep within their own line, which directs them to enforce the moral obligations of society."[95]

Although there is no reason to doubt Warren's piety (in fact, quite the re-

verse), she thus follows Fielding in tasking the clergy only with the public "obligations of society," bluntly warning them to "keep within their own line." She suggests, in effect, that it is the job of individuals to save their souls while it is the job of religious institutions to promote a culture of economic restraint, so that Warren marries her own fiercely independent brand of Protestantism to a civic religion that could have fallen from the pages of Middleton. And indeed, so close is Warren's perspective to Middleton's that she shares his enthusiastic view of the Roman religion. Praising "the splendid commonwealth of Rome" for "the strictest regard paid to the worship of [the] gods" and the "sacred observance of . . . religious rites" (3:402), her *History* goes so far as to suggest that it was the "superstitious attention observed, relative to omens" that preserved Roman liberty (3:403). This willingness to acknowledge the social value of "superstitious" beliefs was no small concession for a devout Protestant, and in keeping with her openness toward practical (even constructed) sources of public restraint, Warren's narrator employs many of Gibbon and Fielding's similarly pragmatic techniques. She interjects "probably" on dozens of occasions. She invites her reader, "Let us now rest a little" (3:158) and "Let us here pause a few moments" (3:328). She dispels the miraculous: "Nor is it strange"; "Nor is it surprising" (1:20, 24). And she frequently employs the first-person plural deontic modal: "We must now pursue . . . we must now look over" (1:178, 402).

But in addition to these now familiar rhetorical methods, Warren goes beyond Gibbon's subtly humorous narrator to revive the openly comic style that inspired it. Warren knew *Don Quixote* and admired it enough to use a made-up quote in the "stile of the *Man of La Mancha*" to introduce her critique of Federalism in *Observations on the New Constitution* (1788).[96] *Tom Jones* was also widely circulated in the colonies (taking its place in the libraries of Washington and Jefferson), and given Warren's enthusiasm for comedy (like Fielding, she was an author of stage farces),[97] it is certainly conceivable that she turned its pages. Yet whether Warren was directly inspired by the same quixotic tradition that lay behind Gibbon's historian or was simply deepening the narrative commitment to pluralism that characterizes the rest of her *History,* she joins with Fielding and Cervantes in investing her authorial persona with the heterodox psychology of a comic character. This introduction of comedy into a historical narrative, as the examples of Gordon and Ramsay had demonstrated, was no easy thing to do. Although Gordon had inflected his *History* with moments of wild eccentricity, his contemporaries perceived his comic turns as inappropriate and even antisocial. Ramsay,

meanwhile, had encountered the opposite problem. Steering clear of anything that might be deemed overtly comic, he achieved only a hint of Gibbon's free personality.

Warren, however, found an ingenious way to imbue a serious work of history with an explicitly comic humour: she gendered her narrative.[98] As she notes at the outset of her *History*: "there are certain appropriate duties assigned to each sex and doubtless it is the more peculiar province of masculine Strength . . . to describe the blood-stained field, and relate the story of slaughtered armies. Sensible of this, the trembling heart has recoiled at the magnitude of the undertaking" (1:iv). Here, the author suggests that her feminine psychology has led her to resist describing "the blood-stained field" or "slaughtered armies," and her narrative repeatedly interrupts itself to drag the reader's eyes away from martial affairs: "Let us now rest a little from the roar of cannon, and the dread sound of bombardment, thunder, and death, those horrid interpreters of the hostile dispositions of man" (3:158).

This narrative humour culminates in Warren's highly unusual treatment of the Battle of Yorktown. Widely perceived as the event that prompted the British government to recognize the Declaration of Independence, it had been discussed vividly by both Gordon and Ramsay. As it runs in Ramsay's version:

> I proceed to relate real events. The besiegers commenced their second parallel 200 yards from the works of the besieged. Two redoubts which were advanced on the left of the British, greatly impeded the progress of the combined armies. It was therefore proposed to carry them by storm. To excite a spirit of emulation, the reduction of the one was committed to the French, of the other to the Americans. The assailants marched to the assault with unloaded arms; having passed the abbatis and palisades, they attacked on all sides, and carried the redoubt in a few minutes with the loss of 8 killed and 28 wounded.[99]

Punctuating his narrative with an insistence that the following battle is "real," Ramsay then makes it feel so by saturating his account with detail, relating times and distances and, finally, the precise number of the dead.

In contrast to her male predecessors, Warren's historian declines to provide specifics about Yorktown. Instead, she briskly remarks that the British "kept their ground from the sixth to the sixteenth of October," at which point, they failed to keep it any more (3:19). And indeed, so averse is Warren's historian to the miseries of war that she not only hurries past America's heroic victory but ruminates on the unhappiness that it caused the British general:

"promises and distant expectations were far from being adequate to the relief of a mind borne down by disappointment"; "His situation had been for some time truly distressing"; "In this hopeless condition, his own works in ruins" (3.14, 17, 21). In such moments, the author's feminine humour comes to seem not just heterodox but frankly bizarre. While declaring herself a patriot, she seems less inspired by the war than depressed by it. And yet, as many of her contemporaries would have acknowledged, this peculiar behavior also had a latent social benefit. Although America's post-Revolutionary citizens were proud of their independence from England, they were concerned that the war itself had damaged their democratic character. As Ramsay broods: "War never fails to injure the morals of the people engaged in it. The American war, in particular . . . could not be carried on without violating private rights" (2:324). Or, as Warren's historian more directly puts it: "The partiality to military honor, has a tendency to nourish a disposition for arbitrary power." (3:420). War, in short, was coercive, regimented, and antidemocratic. For a historian to write vividly of its glories was to fan the martial sentiments that nourished tyranny, and so by erasing the battlefields of the Revolution, Warren's historian was not, in fact, neglecting them. Instead, she was preserving their democratic legacy.

Like Quixote's knight errantry or Petty's economic reductionism, the feminine humour of Warren's historian thus guided her down an eccentric path to an unexpected public good, and no less than *Tom Jones* and *The Decline and Fall,* Warren's *History* seemed poised to have a deep effect on public mores. In 1804, Thomas Jefferson defeated John Adams for the presidency, promising to roll back the Federalists' overweening efforts to curb America's regional idiosyncracies. A year later, he then distributed copies of Warren's *History* to his cabinet, giving the members of his administration the opportunity to learn from the work's comic approach to governance.[100] In Warren's humourous author, they could find a model for maximizing freedom through regulation, exemplifying what they hoped their own anti-Federalist method of governance would be. Strong enough to stop the merchant coasts from bullying the harvest plains, yet limited enough to preserve the individual character of its constituent states, it would nourish the free variety that had made America strong.

Unfortunately, however, there is no evidence that Jefferson or his cabinet ever thumbed the chapters of Warren's *History,* let alone absorbed them deeply. And this, of course, is the challenge faced by eccentricity. No matter how fruitful it might be, it can struggle to find a purchase in the habituated preju-

dices of the majority, and it would be little surprise if the men of the federal government casually ignored a female historian who scrubbed the battle from their revolutionary war. But even if Warren was marginalized in her own time, her narrative style can be useful to us today, for it provides a useful complement to the three comic practices described in the preceding chapters. As we have seen, all three of these practices promote populism by weakening autocracy. *Impetuoso* thrusts the mighty ahead until they need assistance; *imitatio* snatches the powers of kings for the masses; and *indolentia* removes the hierarchical influence of property. In this context, the value of Warren's quixotic narrator is that she helps manage the resulting growth of popular power, preventing it from devolving into a majority rule that crushes minorities. Or, to put it in slightly more technical terms, Warren's *History* suggests that comedy can enable democracy to grow not just horizontally but vertically, developing the second-order regulatory functions that keep the short-term impulses of free citizens from damaging the long-term health of their society. If so, then comedy could be claimed as the source of a more sustainable *demokratia* that enables citizens not just to achieve freedom but to maintain and expand it; and to explore this possibility further, chapter 6 will recover a second example of comedy's contribution to vertical growth: Washington Irving and Frederick Douglass's use of an ancient comic method to amend the Constitution.

Amending Ourselves

Two months after the U.S. Supreme Court declared in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that Americans of African descent were not protected by the Constitution, Frederick Douglass countered by dryly remarking that the justices had rather overstepped their jurisdiction: "Judge Taney can do many things, but he cannot perform impossibilities. He cannot bail out the ocean, annihilate the firm old earth, or pluck the silvery star of liberty from our Northern sky."[1] Having disposed of the pretensions of the chief justice, Douglass then turned his wit on his fellow abolitionists. As he noted, a great many of them had seen *Dred Scott* as a prompt to tear up the Constitution and secede, washing their hands of the crimes of the South.[2] This, in Douglass's view, was an absurd response. Instead of emancipating slaves, secession simply abandoned them, and caught up in the madness of it all, Douglass pivoted into the ludicrous himself: "if I were on board of a pirate ship, with a company of men and women whose lives and liberties I had put in jeopardy, I would not clear my soul of their blood by jumping in the long boat, and singing out: 'No union with pirates.'" (352). Like Douglass's ridicule of the chief justice, this lunatic song drew smiles from his audience, but it also occasioned surprise. *Dred Scott,* after all, was a major legal setback to abolition, and while William Lloyd Garrison was burning a copy of the Constitution and Preston Brooks was bloodying Charles Sumner on the Senate floor, here was Douglass, engaging in a pirate-ship burlesque.

As strange as Douglass's comic tone might seem, I will suggest in this chapter that it drew on an ancient tradition for initiating democratic change. Although Plato had ridiculed *demokratia* as a kind of headless chicken, we saw in chapter 1 that successful democracies inspired public confidence by

claiming an enduring (even eternal) foundation for their laws. Athens had its immortal gods, while the United States had its Constitution. To change course, democracies therefore needed to alter their foundations without compromising their aura of permanence, and since the days of ancient Greece, comedy had provided one useful means of negotiating this paradox. The Athenians had discovered that a certain form of comic mirth—inclusive laughter—allowed them to reappraise the sacred while maintaining its public authority, and as I will show over the following pages, this method of civic revision was rediscovered in America following the drafting of the Constitution. Promoted by America's first comedy (Royall Tyler's *The Contrast,* 1787), its first rhetorical textbook (Caleb Bingham's *The Columbian Orator,* 1797), and its first comic best seller (Washington Irving's *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon,* 1819), it helped America's first citizens rethink the Constitution without forsaking the authorizing legacy of the Founding Fathers. Like the technique of eccentric governance explored in chapter 5, inclusive laughter thus provided a rhetorical method for easing democracies out of a reactionary rut, and so when Douglass adopted it in his oration against *Dred Scott* he was not minimizing the seriousness of America's constitutional battle over slavery. Quite the opposite: he was offering his audience a way to amend America's founding document while preserving its high gravity.

As far back as Homer,[3] the ancient Greeks had recognized two broad varieties of laughter. There was exclusive laughter, which solidified the community's identity by rejecting outsiders, and there was inclusive laughter, which encouraged self-critique by prompting the community to smile at itself.[4] The former spills out from book 2 of the *Iliad,* where Thersites is scorned by rest of the Greeks.[5] The latter, meanwhile, is dramatized at the end of book 1. After Hera and Zeus become embroiled in a nasty fight that seems sure to end in violence, Hephaestus launches into a comic bit where he parodies his own lameness. Watching her son make fun of himself, Hera smiles, and, as she stops taking herself so seriously, the mood on Olympus shifts from anger to mirth.[6] Laughing together, the gods are able to change.

In the *Iliad,* this change soon fizzles out. It takes place not within a community of equals but under the tyranny of Zeus, and while Hera and Hephaestus may be willing to laugh at themselves, the great god is not. He continues to insist on having his way, and the world soon shakes with war. A few centuries later, however, inclusive laughter found a more lasting political function in Athenian democracy.[7] With a wink and a grin, the Old Comics thrust the gods on stage, serving up such farcical spectacles as the quicksilver

sphincter of Dionysus in *Frogs*. Crucially, these moments of levity were not invitations for the audience to laugh *at* the gods. Impiety (as Socrates was to find out shortly) was a capital crime in Athens, and that same year, Pentheus was rent limb from limb in Euripides's *Bakkhai* for mocking Dionysus. Rather, as in the *Iliad,* the implication was that the audience was laughing *with* the god.[8] Moved by the revelation that even a deity could smile at himself, the demos discovered a space in which they could take themselves less seriously too. They were not perfect, and as the proposed reforms of the comic chorus filled their ears, they opened their minds to the possibility of change.

After Old Comedy, the tradition of putting gods on the stage ceased, but the practice of encouraging audiences to laugh at their own sacred cows did not. A generation prior to the American Revolution, Henry Fielding declared that the historical purpose of comedy was to hand audiences a mirror in which to smile at themselves,[9] and so it was with the first original American comedy, Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787). Produced five years after the Revolution, Tyler's play has often been cited as a source of exclusive laughter, largely because of its satiric digs at Americans who embrace European culture at the expense of their own native wit.[10] Yet the climax of Tyler's comedy involves the opposite sort of mirth. For the entire play, the audience has been treated to the swashbuckling courage of a veteran called Manley. Weaned on *Cato* and aspiring to be a second General Washington,[11] Manley is a reminder of the Revolutionary colonist, the noble citizen-soldier who forged America with his strength of character.[12] But for all that Manley represents the best of America's past, he is not entirely suited to its future. As his sister sighs, his conversation, though admirable for its piety, is "as melancholy as . . . church."[13] While Catonic virtue may have been the stuff of the Revolution, the new America yearns for something lighter, and to help things along, *The Contrast* ends by showing its steel hero bend. Manley—having just drawn his sword to protect his lady-love—is interrupted midthrust by her cash-counting father, who voices the mercantilism of post-Revolutionary America: "Come, come, no fine speeches; mind the main chance!"[14] No one, that is, wants to hear another of Manley's churchy declamations, and as the hero sheepishly closes his mouth and joins in the closing festivities, the early American audience saw an invitation to do the same. They were not scoffing at Manley any more than the Greeks had scoffed at Dionysus. But in his formal gravity and masculine aspect, they caught a glimpse of their own Revolutionary hangover and smiled. The times had changed, and laughing away the martial stiffness of their prior self, they adapted to an age of peace.[15]

A decade after *The Contrast,* this comic practice was introduced to thousands of American classrooms by Caleb Bingham's rhetorical textbook *The Columbian Orator* (1797). Bingham begins by declaring that the successful orator must straddle a contradiction. Effective speeches have the ring of naturalness about them, and yet there are a number of artificial techniques—from practiced gestures to poetic figures—that make speakers more convincing.[16] By acknowledging this contradiction, the *Orator* engages with the same crisis of national identity that had been dramatized in *The Contrast.* Because the United States could not legitimate itself by appealing to its ancient laws or customs, its citizens habitually claimed a foundation for their actions in an indigenous virtue, but as Manley's anachronistic rectitude had shown, the problem with this claim was that it threatened cultural development. The challenge facing American students was thus to retain their native credibility while adapting to new circumstances, and to help them do so, Bingham turns in his introduction to "the representations of the theatre."[17] Such representations, Bingham suggests, provide a practical joining of the "counterfeit" with the "truth" (10), allowing audiences to experience an artifice that seems like nature: "concern and solicitude for distressed virtue, rise in our breasts; and tears are extorted from us for oppressed innocence: though at the same time, perhaps, we are ready to laugh at ourselves for being thus decoyed" (11). So powerfully, that is, does the theater make us feel that we are in the presence of natural "virtue" that it drives us to weep actual tears. Yet the illusion is not complete enough to seduce us entirely, for even as the stage has the real-world effect of making us cry, it also prompts us "to laugh at ourselves" for feeling the emotional truth of events that our minds acknowledge to be an empty fiction.

As Bingham's use of the phrase "laugh at ourselves" reveals, he believed that this teasing apart of the responses of our bodies and our minds was facilitated by the special properties of inclusive laughter. Through a comic breaking of the fourth wall, our minds come to see that what seems natural is in fact a fiction and, as a fiction, can be revised. Because of the inclusive nature of the comedy, however, this break does not completely separate us from the theatrical scene. Instead, because we are laughing *with* the scene, not *at* it, we maintain our emotional connection to the events before us. The risible artificiality perceived by our minds thus does not destroy the sense of naturalness that engages our feelings, leading Bingham to suggest that inclusive laughter can help America's young citizens solve their national dilemma. Enabling them to rewrite their performances without sacrificing their natural-

ness, it opens up a form of cultural growth that retains the emotional power of authenticity.

To inculcate this comic practice in its readers, Bingham's *Orator* turned to the old practice of *imitatio,* providing a selection of "Humorous Dialogues" as rhetorical models.[18] For the first, Bingham picked a surreal spectacle in which the ghosts of "a North-American Savage" and "an English Duellist" argue while waiting in the classical underworld for "Charon's boat" (50). As originally written by the English baron Lyttelton George, this dialogue was little more than a harangue on the evils of dueling, but in the American context of the *Orator*, the dialogue's effect was more comically nuanced. When the savage observes that "the English are a barbarous nation" (51), the American reader would have smiled, and when the savage brushes off the Englishman's criticism by remarking, "that is our way . . . Every nation has its customs," the American reader would have sagely agreed (50). Bingham's students, that is, would have seen many of their own values in the savage,[19] and the *Orator* further encourages this identification by pairing the dialogue with a speech by "an Indian Chief" who reminds the colonists that they are his "Brothers" (54).

In keeping with the comic method outlined in its preface, however, the *Orator* does not allow this enthusiasm for a native Americanness to persist untroubled. It breaks the fourth wall to reveal the more risible side of the savage's natural virtue. After refusing to ride in Charon's barque with the duelist, the savage decides to swim the Styx—only to fret at the thought of his beloved blanket getting wet. To keep it dry, he places it carefully in the boat—only to suffer a spasm of horror at its proximity to the villainous duelist: "see that the murderer does not sit upon it, or touch it. If he does, I will burn it instantly in the fire I see yonder" (52). So intensely, that is, does the savage live in the emotions of the moment that he initially forgets his treasured possession, then frets at the thought of it getting soggy, then shudders at the idea it might be touched, and then exclaims that he will immolate it. And all the while, it never occurs to him that on the other shore waits the judgment of Hell. This caricature of the savage is a worthless portrait of America's indigenous populations, but it is a true mirror of the anxieties of its Anglo-American spectators, who, in the savage's ludicrous simplicity, were shown the other side of their valorization of nature. When they laughed at the savage's behavior, they were thus also being invited to laugh at their own, acknowledging—like the spectators of *The Contrast* when they chuckled ruefully with Manley—the need to adapt their native virtue to changing times.

Over its later dialogues, the *Orator* then invests this use of inclusive laughter with an explicitly democratic function. In "A Dialogue on Civilization," a goodly farmer is abused as a "fool" and rudely told to "learn *civilization*" by various gentlefolk about the town (289), prompting him to fantasize about a return to nature: "If this is civilization, I desire to return to my savage haunt again" (293). After a moment's reflection, though, he remarks, "I don't despair yet of meeting with people of real civilization," and, pulling up his boots, he presses on (293). Even as the dialogue prompts its readers to smile at the contemporary misuse of the term "civilization," it thus does not counsel them to abandon the word entirely. Instead it urges them to preserve the word's original meaning through revision, and the next page of the *Orator*—a reprinted speech from the Reverend Samuel Miller—emphasizes one revision in particular: "Oh Africa! thou loud proclaimer of the rapacity, the treachery, and cruelty of civilized man! . . . how long shall thy savage inhabitants have reason to utter complaints, and to imprecate the vengeance of Heaven against civilization?" (294). Lamenting the greed, the dishonesty, and the brutality of slavery, these lines pointedly juxtapose the actions of the "savage" and the "civilized." Like the goodly farmer, however, their speaker does not decide to retire to some "savage haunt." Instead, he calls out for change, demanding to know "how long" it will be until civilization lives up to its name.

With this condemnation of slavery, Bingham revealed his interest in having his readers rewrite more than their individual performances. He wanted them to rewrite their Constitution, and the *Orator* put the practice of inclusive laughter to work on this ambitious project by reprinting a 1766 speech from the English Whig William Pitt. In the speech, Pitt argues that unless the members of Parliament are willing to reduce their fellow men to "slaves," the British Constitution must be amended to provide representation for the American colonies. As Pitt knew, such amendment was not unprecedented.[20] Sixty years earlier, the Union with Scotland Act had rewritten England's ancient Constitution to grant Scotland representation in both the House of Lords and the Commons.[21] Yet as Pitt also knew, in order to make this revision, the act had insisted that the newly created nation of Great Britain would exist in perpetuity: "this Act of Parliament, with the Establishment therein contained, shall be held and observed in all Time coming . . . without any Alteration thereof . . . for ever."[22] The act was not, that is, simply a change to England's existing Constitution. It was a new original, one that laid a foundation that would "for ever" be.

When Pitt stood up to call for America's representation in Parliament, he

was therefore confronted with the problem of how to alter a Constitution that was, by its very nature, unalterable. And so he turned to comedy: "There is an idea in some, that the Colonies are virtually represented in this House. I would fain know by whom an American is represented here? Is he represented by any knight of the shire, in any county in this kingdom?" (59). Dryly asking the assembled members of Parliament to tell him which of them represents America, Pitt then heightens the absurdity by repeating his question in a more colorful vein, begging to see the "knight of the shire" who hails from Massachusetts. This is a ridiculous moment, but what makes it comically effective is not just its humor. It is its breaking of the fourth wall. Pitt's rhetorical questions to the members of Parliament remind them that they too are part of the show. While it has become second nature for these 558 parliamentarians to cram themselves onto green serge benches in an old whitewashed chapel in Westminster, their makeshift assembly is as revisable as any public performance, and having opened his audience's minds to the possibility of change, Pitt then pivots to the Constitution: "This is what is called the *rotten part* of the Constitution . . . it must be amputated." Bluntly, boldly, Pitt calls for constitutional reform, and no sooner has he done so than, in good comic fashion, he restores the fourth wall and proceeds with the show. Grandly declaring that "The Commons of America, represented in their several assemblies, have ever been in possession of this, their constitutional right," Pitt insists that what seems like a change is, in fact, already the case (60). Far from altering the Constitution, his proposed amendment simply confirms a "constitutional right" that has existed for "ever," and so just as The Union Act marks the original starting point of British history, the new Constitution with America will be what has always been.

The *Orator* became a standard textbook in the North through the Civil War,[23] and making good on Bingham's hopes, its comic model for amending the British Constitution was extended by two of its students to reform the slaveholding portions of their own founding document. The first of these students was Washington Irving. Irving was drilled in the lessons of the *Orator* as a child,[24] and during his free hours, he immersed himself in the works of Fielding and other English humorists who celebrated laughter as a vehicle of social reform. These influences (probably more the latter than the former, since Irving was by his own admission an indifferent student) encouraged him to believe that humor could prompt the American people to smile at their follies and change. And at the ripened age of thirty-six, he presented the fruits of this belief in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819–20). Like the

Orator, this work offers a mix of stylistically varied essays that begin by touching on the tension in American identity between nature and artifice. As the author confesses in his introductory "Account of Himself," he knows no place with more "natural" beauty than America, yet he nevertheless has a yearning to see "the masterpieces of art."[25] This all seems serious enough, but when the narrator then declares his intention to visit England to "see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated," the tone reveals itself as comic. Irving is not simply calling attention to the conflicted identity of his fellow Americans. He is inviting them to laugh at their need to seek validation in the colossus of European culture.

By poking fun at his contemporaries, Irving was also mocking his own behavior. He had himself sailed for England, seeking literary fame, and he deepens the joke through his dissection of Anglophilia in "The Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap." This essay opens with a light examination of Bardolotry, when abruptly, the narrator reveals that he is more than an anatomist of Shakespeare worship. He is a "pious" acolyte.[26] Flipping through the "comic scenes of Henry IV," he decides to make a pilgrimage to the site of Harry and Falstaff's "madcap revelry," hurling himself into a historical search for fictional characters that immediately turns ridiculous. Surrounded by the gloom of modern Eastcheap, the narrator mourns that London is no longer as it never was: "ah, how sadly is the scene changed since the roaring days of Falstaff!" In place of drunken revelers, he finds a "plodding tradesman." In place of Dame Quickly, "a tallow-chandler's widow." And in place of Bardolph, an abstemious "deputy organist." Yet as the author's imaginary Eastcheap slowly fades, he begins to spin new myths. There is "the monument of a mighty fishmonger," Wat Tyler, who rose to become Lord Mayor, and there is the legend of the tapster Robert Preston. These new heroes of commerce and trade gradually assume the same "legendary" form as Shakespeare's original, until finally the author finds himself holding "a japanned iron tobacco-box" that depicts "Prince Hal and Falstaff" as they drink toasts in the spot where he himself now stands.[27] This is the very height of absurdity: to discover an authentic moment of made-up English history in a modern piece of pseudo-Oriental manufacture. But beneath the shifting layers of humor, a single point is discernible. By comically troubling and then restoring the illusion of authenticity, the author has fashioned a new mythology, showing his fellow Americans a way to reconcile their competing urges for art and nature into an adaptable history

This comic practice culminates in *The Sketch Book*'s most legendary work

of all: "Rip Van Winkle." Recounting the singular experience of a pre-Revolutionary New Yorker who wakes up with a start to find himself in a post-Revolutionary United States, the story emphasizes the massive alternations that America has undergone in the interim: "every thing was strange . . . the very character of the people seemed changed."[28] Balancing these historical transformations, however, is the story's tone of fairytale timelessness, leading to an at once evolving-and-eternal sense of American identity that is embodied by Rip himself. On the origins of Rip's legend, the narrator remarks: "[Rip van Winkle] was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having been so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood, but knew it by heart."[29] Here, the narrative breaks the fourth wall to call attention to its own construction, only to then promptly restore the illusion, insisting that Rip's memory, along with the rest of American history, is ready to be learned "by heart." Like Pitts's new Constitution, the past that never was will now and always be.

The nimbleness of Irving's prose gives it a comic effect far beyond *The Contrast* or any of the selections of the *Orator.* Yet unlike Tyler and Bingham, Irving does not walk far down the road of democratic reform. He makes some gestures toward pluralism—for example, a plea for the virtues of the "Indian character"[30]—but, generally, he ignores the role that inclusive laughter might play in solving the problem of slavery. During the run-up to the Civil War, however, Irving would connect the comic method of *The Sketch Book* to contemporary politics by producing a new biography of George Washington. For most of Irving's contemporaries, Washington was equivalent to America, and so to write his history was literally to write the history of their own nation. By the time that Irving picked up his pen, moreover, there were already two accounts of Washington's life that had enforced opposite approaches to the now raging broil over abolition. The first account, published between 1804 and 1807, had weighed in by insisting on the sacred value of the Constitution. Its author was Supreme Court justice John Marshall, a determined Federalist who had set out to discern how "the constitution originally stood."[31] So committed was Marshall's originalism that he believed that the essential character of the Constitution predated any of its amendments, including even the Bill of Rights: "the necessity of these amendments had been urged by the enemies of the constitution, and denied by its friends."[32] In keeping with this view of the Constitution, Marshall describes George Washington as similarly perfect from the get-go: "No truth can be uttered with more confidence than

that his ends were always upright, and his means always pure . . . he was guided by an unvarying sense of moral right" (2:448). Washington, that is, was no average American, and Marshall pairs this idealization of America's extraordinary president with a denigration of popular rule: "between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos" (2:447). Here, Marshall recognizes the flexibility of democracy and recoils from it, instead co-opting Washington in the service of a government that carries the imprimatur of unvarying "moral right."

The other major pre–Civil War biography of Washington, published between 1834 and 1837 by Harvard scholar Jared Sparks,[33] did exactly the reverse: it offered a skeptical look at Washington and the Constitution, suggesting that each was the imperfect product of material circumstance. Indeed, so far was Sparks from idolizing Washington that he did not hesitate to amend the man's actual words: "the writer himself [i.e., Washington], through haste or inadvertence, may have fallen into an awkward use of words, faults of grammar, or inaccuracies of style, and when such occur from this source, I have equally felt bound to correct them."[34] Having thus disposed of Washington's writings, Sparks then proceeded to banish the atmosphere of popular veneration that hung about Washington's most famous speech, his farewell address: "As a mere literary performance, though excellent, it is neither extraordinary, nor in any degree superior to many others . . . Take away this name and this circumstance, and its powerful charm would be broken."[35] Beneath Sparks's unsentimental eye, the "powerful charm" of Washington's last words is shattered. What seemed an extraordinary work is, in fact, merely of mild interest. Not surprisingly, then, when Sparks comes to the Constitution, he sees it quite differently from Marshall. Quoting Washington's remark that it is "the best constitution, that can be obtained at this epoch,"[36] Sparks presents it as a product of its time—one that will hopefully be eclipsed.

By expressing these two views of the Constitution, Marshall and Sparks revealed the division that slavery had effected in Americans' attitude toward their founding document. While many Americans shared Marshall's view of the Constitution as the cornerstone of America's "perpetual" republic,[37] there were also a growing number who had come to share Sparks's doubts, particularly with regard to the eyesore of Article I, Section 9: "The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person." By providing a spe-

cific year—1808—after which the article was no longer entirely valid, Section 9 wrote an expiration date into the Constitution, revealing that even its original authors had never seen it as eternally fixed. Beyond the section's admission of its own impermanence, moreover, there was the shameful manner in which it expressed its intent. Although the section's purpose was to allow the South to continue importing slaves, the word "slave" nowhere appears, its place taken by the inelegant euphemism: "Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit." To readers like Sparks, such evasive language was proof that the framers of the Constitution had drafted an intentionally ambiguous document. Like a contract filled with doublespeak, its authority was doubtful, and the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison did not hesitate to send it up in flame.

Irving was well aware of this disagreement, and in his own biography of Washington, he moved to resolve it. Drawing on the practice of inclusive laughter he had explored in *The Sketch Book,* he showed that it was possible to undertake Spark's revisions without sacrificing the sense of sanctity that, as Marshall saw, gave the Constitution its peculiar authority.[38] Irving begins to hint at this solution by demonstrating that even the immortal Washington was capable of laughing at himself. Discussing Washington's home life, Irving remarks that "Colonel Henry Lee . . . does not seem to have been much under the influence of that 'reverential awe' which Washington is said to have inspired."[39] This is an electric observation, one that seems sure to end up with Lee (and perhaps Irving too) disgracing himself. But Irving is able to save both their reputations by relating the following anecdote:

> Washington one day at table mentioned his being in want of carriage horses and asked Lee if he knew where he could get a pair.
>
> "I have a fine pair, general," replied Lee, "but you cannot get them."
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "Because you will never pay more than half price for any thing; and I must have full price for my horses."
>
> The bantering reply set Mrs. Washington laughing, and her parrot, perched beside her, joined in the laugh. The general took this familiar assault upon his dignity in great good part. "Ah, Lee, you are a funny fellow," said he, "—see that bird is laughing at you." (4:590–91)

This scene would not be out of place in a stage farce, the detail of the parrot making it thoroughly ridiculous. Yet even as it dispels the "reverential awe" that surrounds Washington, it does so only to make his legend anew. Like

Dionysus in *Frogs,* Washington plays the fool to show that greatness can endure through change, for he too had discovered the power of laughter to adapt nature to circumstance: "in that fit of laughter, it was sagely presumed that he threw off the burthen of care which had been weighing down his spirits throughout the war. He certainly relaxed much of his thoughtful gravity of demeanor" (4:508).

Having illustrated Washington's willingness to remake himself through laughter, Irving then pressed his countrymen to make a comic amendment of their own. Where Marshall had mythologized the Constitution and Sparks had reduced it to a paper compromise, Irving's biography claimed it as the literary version of Washington: an originary text that could be revised without diminishing its sanctity. Irving began by compressing the Constitutional Convention into a single sentence: "We forbear to go into the voluminous proceedings of this memorable convention, which occupied from four to seven hours each day for four months, and in which every point was the subject of able and scrupulous discussion by the best talent and noblest spirits of the country" (4:530). The briefness of this description surprised one of the biography's early reviewers, who observed that Irving had shown no such reluctance to delve into the vast details of Washington's prior accomplishments. But Irving's reason for brevity becomes clear in his tightly worked summation: "The result was the formation of the constitution of the United States, which (with some amendments made in after years) still exists."[40] Here, in miniature, is the comic action of Irving's whole oeuvre. Opening with a grave pronouncement—"The result was"—that makes it seem as though the Constitution leapt into being without any individual author, the line rises to a dignified, formal conclusion: "the constitution of the United States." Yet no sooner has the text invested the Constitution with this austere authority than it offers a parenthetical qualification: "(with some amendments made in after years)." Until finally, having revealed the Constitution as a work of artifice in time, the line concludes by repairing the fourth wall: "still exists." Over its brief course, the line has presented the Constitution as an awe-inspiring original, allowed it to be revised, and then restored its authority, completing a full comic arc.

Like Bingham's *Orator,* Irving's biography then directly applied this method of comic amendment to the matter of slavery. At a time when John Brown was preparing his Harper's Ferry raid and southern fire-eaters like Edmund Ruffin were calling for armed secession, Irving's biography reminded his readers that they could instead follow Washington's example. After all, just as

Washington was comfortable revising his own image, so too had he always imagined that the Constitution would be changed by future generations: "We are not to expect perfection in this world; but mankind in modern times have apparently made some progress in the science of government. Should that which is now offered to the people of America be found on experiment less perfect than it can be made, a constitutional door is left open for its amelioration" (4:532). While revering America's laws as the manifestations of an eternal "science," Washington had thus left "a constitutional door . . . open" for amendments, and Irving's biography maintains this pairing of the eternal and the provisional by ending with a comic reminder of the one part of the Constitution that the great president had explicitly targeted for change: "in August 1797, [Washington] writes to his nephew, Lawrence Lewis, in a letter which we have had in our hands, 'I wish from my soul that the legislature of this State could see the policy of a gradual abolition of slavery. It might prevent much future mischief' " (5.339) Here, Irving introduces Washington's abolitionist sentiments in a manner that would have cheered the schoolmasters of his youth. For in keeping with the example set forth by the *Orator,* Irving performs a breaking of the fourth wall: "in a letter which we have had in our hands." As Bingham recommends, Irving calls attention to the constructedness of his written history, modeling the old democrats' comic method of revision. What seems absolute fact is also the work of human hands in time, enabling us to rewrite the Constitution in the way that Irving is rewriting Washington.

Like Washington, Irving did not live to see the end of slavery in America, but his comic push for abolition was brought to fruition by the man whose scorn at *Dred Scott* began this chapter: Douglass. Douglass was also a student of Bingham's *Orator,* and a rather better one than Irving: "When I was about thirteen years old . . . I had made enough money to buy what was then a very popular school book, viz: the 'Columbian Orator' . . . This volume was, indeed, a rich treasure, and every opportunity afforded me, for a time, was spent in diligently perusing it."[41] Out of the *Orator*'s great body of material, Douglass particularly remembered: "Lord Chatham's speech on the American war, and speeches by the great William Pitt and by Fox. These were all choice documents to me, and I read them, over and over again, with an interest that was ever increasing" (157). "Lord Chatham" was, in fact, the same as "the great William Pitt," and in this twice-named influence Douglass found the English statesman's comic method for reforming Constitutions.

As Irving had done in his biography of Washington, Douglass used Pitt's

method to rewrite history, this time his own. In 1845, Douglass had penned his life story for the first time: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave.* As its third-person title suggests, this work was not intended as a personal statement by Douglass. It had been urged into production by the white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and in keeping with Garrison's mantra of "no Union with slaveholders," its author expressed open contempt for the Constitution:

> we utterly abhor and repudiate this government and the Constitution as a dark and damning conspiracy against all the purposes of government. Both its framers and administrators were, and have been until now, little better than a band of pirates. We would make clean work of both the government and the Constitution, and not amend or force a new construction upon either, contradicted by the whole history of the nation; but would abolish both . . . We are not for mending old clothes with new cloth, or putting new wine into old bottles, but for starting afresh under a new and higher light than our piratical fathers saw.[42]

With this rejection of efforts to "amend" the "Constitution," Douglass aligns himself firmly with Garrison's theological platform. Indeed, the very metaphors he uses about not "mending old clothes with new cloth" or "putting new wine into old bottles" are the ones employed in the New Testament to explain why the laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy need to be torn up and replaced. To Douglass, the Constitution is an imperfect, worldly document, and like a good Christian, he looks forward to its destruction by fire.

By the time Douglass came to write his second autobiography, however, his opinion on these matters had changed drastically.[43] Published in 1855, *My Bondage and My Freedom* offers a revised version of Douglass's story, as the reader watches the author literally rewrite his own life. After acknowledging that he was once a "disciple of William Lloyd Garrison" (395), Douglass reveals that he has come "to re-think the whole subject" of the Constitution (397), believing now that the venerable document should be reinterpreted as a "warrant for the abolition of slavery in every state in the American Union" (398). This, Douglass admits, is a massive political shift, and to defend it, he begins by pleading that his initial opinion of the Constitution was not really his own but had been impressed upon him by his first teachers: "I was bound . . . by their superior knowledge, to take their opinions as the true ones" (397). Then, to convince his readers of the truth of this statement, Douglass pivots into comedy, portraying a similar mistake often made by white abolitionists:

> to show their contempt for the feeling [of prejudice], they proved that they had not entirely recovered from it; often illustrating the saying, in their conduct, that a man may "stand up so straight as to lean backward." When it was said to me, "Mr. Douglass, I will walk to meeting with you; I am not afraid of a black man," I could not help thinking—seeing nothing very frightful in my appearance—"And why should you be?" The children at the north had all been educated to believe that if they were bad, the old black man—not the old devil—would get them; and it was evidence of some courage, for any so educated to get the better of their fears. (398)

With this wry aside, Douglass summons up the image of a white man trying so hard to prove his acceptance of blacks that he flatly insults them: "I am not afraid of a black man." In doing so, Douglass nudges his white readers to smile at themselves, acknowledging that they, too, have committed absurdities in their dealings with other races. Then, by noting that such errors are not evidence of a permanent blemish of character but simply a result of what whites have "all been educated to believe," Douglass relates this state of affairs to his own miseducation at the hands of Garrison. Far from laughing at his white readers, Douglass is thus laughing with them. He too has been led astray by his teachers, and by smiling with his audience at their shared folly, he invites them to join in reforming their nature to what it always would have been.

On the stump, Douglass enlarged this method of comic revision by combining it with the one feature of comedy that had necessarily been neglected by Irving's writings: live performance. Douglass's speeches were notoriously humorous affairs. "He made us laugh some," a slightly startled spectator observed, used to abolitionist speeches that tended instead toward the fiery or the sentimental.[44] This humor, moreover, was not confined to the odd joke or witty aside. It infused Douglass's entire presentation. As a contemporary remarked, "Douglass is brim full of humor, at times, of the dryest kind . . . You can see it coming a long way off in a peculiar twitch of his mouth. It increases and broadens gradually until it becomes irresistible and all-pervading with his audience."[45] What Douglass offered his audience was thus an opportunity to laugh physically with him, and while much of Douglass's wit had a satiric bent, his overall demeanor was comic. As another contemporary observed, "The humor of Mr. Douglass is much like that of Mr. Joseph Jefferson the great actor, who never makes an effort to be funny, but his humor is of the quiet suppressed type."[46] This comparison between Douglass and "Mr. Joseph Jefferson" is a revealing one, for Jefferson had built his stage reputation on a

single part: that of Rip Van Winkle. To witness Douglass was thus to be invited into the company of a humorist who combined a sense of true Americana with a winking reminder that you were watching a piece of theater. Like the Constitution, it was authentic, and yet like Rip Van Winkle's memories, it was also an adaptable truth.

When Douglass turned merrily in his *Dred Scott* speech to the image of a man singing "no union with pirates," he was thus continuing a long tradition of comic reform. During his Garrison-era orations, Douglass had often invoked pirates in a serious vein, but now he revised himself by deploying their "long boat" in the spirit of play. As in the speeches of Pitt, this play was rather more cutting than in the anecdotes of Irving's biography (or indeed, in the anecdotes of Douglass's own). But Douglass's performance showed his audience that he was willing to make himself part of the joke, and he wrapped up his speech on *Dred Scott* with a broadly comic moment. Turning his attention to the preamble of the Constitution, Douglass reminded his listeners of what it actually said: "'We the people' —not 'We the white people'—not 'We the citizens, or the legal voters'—not 'We the privileged class, and excluding all other classes' but 'We the people'; not 'We the horses and cattle,' but 'We the people'—the men and women, the human inhabitants of the United States, do ordain and establish this Constitution" (354). Through this catalogue of counterfactuals, Douglass builds the impression of ludicrousness before plunging into the plainly absurd: "We the horses and cattle." In doing so, he solidifies the original status of "We the people" while getting his listeners to revise their understanding of it. Despite what Supreme Court justice Taney had ruled, this phrase does not, after all, denote a group of alabaster-skinned gentlemen. Instead, it encompasses all the "human inhabitants" of the United States, male and female, brown and white, rich and poor. By comically breaking the fourth wall, Douglass is thus able to encourage his audience to smile at their own misplaced assumptions without endangering the sanctity of the Constitution. Instead, he reforms the imperfections that Sparks had noted while maintaining an originalism that would have satisfied Marshall himself.

Seen from the broader narrative of this book, Douglass's *Dred Scott* speech enlarges the practice of comic democracy by adding inclusive laughter to the list alongside *impetuoso, imitatio,* the pursuit of indolence, and eccentric governance. Like Paine's *Common Sense,* Jefferson's preamble, Warren's *History,* and the other works discussed in previous chapters, Douglass's speech puts a comic technique to a practical democratic end, mobilizing it as a rhetorical

tool for addressing a public concern. But Douglass does more than toss a fifth practice into our expanding comic toolbox. He also demonstrates that all five practices can build upon one another, increasing each other's democratic gains. On the pragmatic logic of *demokratia,* this growing of popular power cannot be *toward* any particular end. But it can be *away from* an organically related series of problems. And while the site-specific nature of democratic concerns makes it impossible to establish a single master narrative for the development of popular rule, the problem-solving action of comic democracy does offer a mechanism for extending Plato's origin story of *demokratia* into a loose body of subplots and sequels. Once the body's brute desire for freedom has driven it to seek a counterproductive dominion over others, how can we disrupt the concentrations of political authority that result? *Impetuoso.* Once we have dismantled the power above, how can we learn to rule ourselves? *Imitatio.* Once a democratic elite has developed the basic skills of self-rule, how can we spread its power more equally to those below? Indolence. Once a diverse economy has begun to flourish, how can we stop the increasingly powerful majority from ganging up on minorities? Eccentric governance. Once popular government has established itself, how can we maintain its authority without becoming reactionary? Inclusive laughter.

Douglass tacitly substantiated this larger democratic narrative by crafting his own particular version of it. He urged the North into an impetuous war, he promoted an indolent view of property, he styled himself as an eccentric narrator, and he modeled both *imitatio* and inclusive laughter while speaking on the stump.[47] Although Douglass had more pressing concerns on his mind than a tale of comedy's growing role in democracy, his oratorical practice thus revealed how far comic *demokratia* had come from the days of Aristophanes. Having emerged from what ancient philosophers saw as the baser parts of the human psyche, it had developed a branching network of higher functions by addressing a piggyback stack of material concerns. And so at the same time as Douglass's comic toolkit allowed him to promote the raw expansion of popular liberty, it also helped him regulate it, keeping the free from getting so full of themselves that they suppressed the civic flexibility, open-mindedness, and diversity on which their freedom ultimately depended.

Seven years after his *Dred Scott* speech, at the height of the Civil War, Douglass was invited by President Lincoln for a pair of private conversations in the White House. The precise details of these conversations have been much debated,[48] but Douglass himself noted two things in particular. First, Lincoln was not a man who took himself overly seriously: "There was no vain

pomp and ceremony about him . . . he was seated, when I entered, in a low armchair with his feet extended on the floor."[49] This image of a tall man spilling out of his diminutive seat is instantly comic, capturing Lincoln's famous ability to strike a self-deprecating pose: "When I was nominated at Chicago, I had never before sat for a photograph. One fellow thought that many people might like to see what I looked like, so he immediately bought the negative and began selling photographs of me all over the country. I happened to be in Springfield when I heard a boy selling them on the streets. 'Here's your likeness of "Abe" Lincoln!' he shouted. 'Only two shillings! He'll look a lot better once he gets his hair combed!' "[50] Second, Douglass noticed that Lincoln had changed: "What he said on this day showed a deeper moral conviction against slavery than I had ever seen before."[51] Whatever Lincoln's personal views on slavery may have been in the past, he had become committed to taking a public stance for abolition, supporting the Thirteenth Amendment and staking his reelection campaign upon it.

In Douglass's mind, Lincoln's willingness to laugh at himself and his openness to change were connected, and Lincoln's similar view of the matter can be glimpsed in his exchange with Confederate senator Robert M. T. Hunter in early 1865. Hunter was opposed to the Thirteenth Amendment, and he tried to convince the president that it was entirely impractical. Slaves, he claimed, were not accustomed to work without compulsion, while whites were incapable of tilling the South themselves, and so if emancipation were enforced, both groups would starve. Nodding his head sagely, Lincoln responded:

> Mr. Hunter, you ought to know a great deal better about this argument than I, for you have always lived under the slave system. I can only say, in reply to your statement of the case, that it reminds me of a man out in Illinois, by the name of Case, who undertook, a few years ago, to raise a very large herd of hogs. It was a great trouble to feed them, and how to get around this was a puzzle to him. At length he hit on the plan of planting an immense field of potatoes, and, when they were sufficiently grown, he turned the whole herd into the field, and let them have full swing, thus saving not only the labor of feeding the hogs, but also that of digging the potatoes.
>
> Charmed with his sagacity, he stood one day leaning against the fence, counting his hogs, when a neighbor came along. "Well, well," said he, "Mr. Case, this is all very fine. Your hogs are doing very well just now, but you know out here in Illinois the frost comes early, and the ground freezes for a foot deep. Then what you going to do?"

> This was a view of the matter which Mr. Case had not taken into account. Butchering time for hogs was way on in December or January! He scratched his head, and at length stammered: "Well, it may come pretty hard on their snouts, but I don't see but that it will be 'root, hog, or die.'"[52]

Here, Lincoln joins with Douglass in trying to open another man's mind by mocking himself. The real butt of Lincoln's joke is not Mr. Case's guinea-pig livestock (and by extension, Southern whites). The true fool is Case himself, who, "charmed with his sagacity," commits to his own eccentric course, consequences be damned. This farmer, of course, is Lincoln. He is the one who has staked his herd's survival on his own peculiar plan to end slavery and who, when pressed about its shortcomings, can only stammer out a piece of minstrel wisdom: "Root, hog, or die."[53]

With this burlesque performance, Lincoln makes himself a comic character, joining with Douglass, Washington, and the old Greek Dionysus in encouraging an audience to smile at his antics. No doubt it was true, as Hamilton suggested, that southern whites were humiliated by the thought of the Thirteenth Amendment. But Lincoln had once opposed abolition, too, and by revealing that the greatest man in America could smile at his own mistakes, Lincoln showed the southern senator that it was possible to change without compromising one's credibility. Instead, as countless audiences of comedy had done before, America could laugh at itself, transforming into the free country it had always meant to be.

Demokratia at Denshawai

Over the past six chapters, I have suggested that the ancient democrats (and many of their early modern imitators) thought differently about popular rule than we do now. Or to be blunt, I have suggested that they thought *less* about it, focusing their attention more on immediate material problems and reactive short-term solutions. Because this older approach to democracy was pragmatic, it was far from perfect, but it did have its own strengths and successes, a number of which were facilitated by comedy. From Aristophanes to Machiavelli, Jefferson to Douglass, comic orators fashioned a variety of tools for growing *demokratia* both horizontally and vertically, helping to refine its brute hedonism into a set of networked processes that nurtured curiosity, equality, and flexibility. And so without intending to go anywhere in particular, comedy and democracy worked together to evolve, developing higher order functions and gradually becoming more inclusive.

I hope the narrative of this evolution has been interesting in its own right, but from the pragmatic perspective of *demokratia,* its primary worth lies in the fact that there may be another chapter to be written. Although we live now in more rigorously philosophical times, the recent difficulties encountered by modern democracies suggest that there are two possible ways in which the jimmy-rigged tools of the old comics might benefit us in the days ahead. The most basic would be to increase our practical options for fostering democracy, providing us with some time-hewn methods for promoting impetuousness, eccentric governance, and other populist behaviors. This benefit could be achieved without a major restructuring of modern democracy and, indeed, would only require a commitment to the same process that kept comic *demokratia* vital and relevant in the millennia between Aristophanes and Douglass: an adapting of past practice to newer tastes and circumstances.

It would, that is, take nothing more than a modest investment in public education. Comic pieces such as *La Mandragola, Don Quixote, History of the American Revolution,* and *My Bondage and My Freedom* could be read in schools, while the techniques of *imitatio* could be taught in tandem, helping new generations of artists make comic *demokratia* their own.

The second and more radical benefit of reviving the old democratic tools would be to address the counterproductive cultural imperialism encouraged by the liberal-electoral model. The role of comic democracy in this enterprise, as I suggested in the introduction, would be to support the efforts of the "new democrats" by illustrating the effectiveness of a non-utopian method of growing popular rule. Like the first benefit, this one could be achieved through a small investment in education. Yet unlike the first, it would fundamentally shift the way that democracy promotion now works, replacing the universalizing of the liberal-electoral model with a more open-ended pluralism. In practical terms, this would mean that the comic works explored over the preceding chapters would not be exported overseas. Instead, since comic *demokratia* holds to a problem-solving method, and since the root problem facing democracy (as we saw in chapter 1) is concentrations of political authority, we would go to the source and promote these works in prosperous regions in the West. Encouraging the politically empowered to be impetuous, to laugh at themselves, and to let go of their possessions, we would use the old comedies to help dissolve the social hierarchies that inhibit the world's greater creative diversity. At the same time, to keep *demokratia* from being monopolized by any one community, we would also fund scholarship opportunities for minority and international students, so that like Terence when he voyaged from North Africa to Rome, they too could learn the ancient comic secrets if they chose. We would, in short, do away with enlightened imperialism for a focus on the issues here at home, encouraging modern democracies to address their internal shortcomings and support immigration from abroad.

Since these two benefits exist potentially in our democratic future, they cannot be captured by the historical method I have adopted in this book. But to help us bridge the gap between the past of comic democracy and its possible tomorrow, I will use the following pages to shift my historical method a step forward in time, reviving a pair of popular twentieth-century comedies—Aḥmad il-Fār's *Riwāyat Ibn il-Balad* and George Bernard Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*—that responded to a notorious instance of modern democratic imperialism: the Denshawai Incident of 1906. The violence at Denshawai resulted from the efforts of early twentieth-century English liberals to spread

freedom to the world through a mix of education, markets, and militarism. It resulted, that is, from the older liberal prototype on which the liberal-electoral model is based,[1] allowing us to undertake a historical study of comic *demokratia* that bears closely on our democratic present. The suggestion of this study, moreover, is a straightforward one. Although the bloodshed and chaos of incidents like Denshawai have encouraged modern democracies to adopt a more refined idealism,[2] the comedies of il-Fār and Shaw illustrate the value of a shift toward ancient pragmatism instead. Modeling a comic dismantling of empire that makes both colonizers and colonized more prosperously free, *Ibn il-Balad* and *John Bull* offer a practical way to escape the imperialist contradiction that has ensnared liberal states over the past two hundred years. What makes this pair of comedies particularly useful as examples for the future, moreover, is that they go beyond showing how comic *demokratia* can contribute to modern democracy. They also suggest an unexpected reciprocity. For even as these comedies resist the extreme consequence of the liberal-electoral model—the metastasizing of utopianism into imperialism—they do not reject idealism entirely. Instead, they suggest that utopian values such as freedom and equality can be used to make *demokratia* more proactively pragmatic, opening the possibility of a partnership between ancient and modern populism that works better than either alone.

Aḥmad Fahīm il-Fār was a popular, cross-dressing, beast-mimicking comic in early twentieth-century Cairo, but the precise origins of his performances are murky.[3] We know little about il-Fār himself, and unlike his famous Egyptian predecessor Yaqub Sanu, who wrote in imitation of Molière,[4] il-Fār was not self-consciously literary. While he had access to a rich library of influences that stretched from Plautus to the Restoration to the Cairo playwrights of the preceding generation,[5] his goal was to please his audience, not impress them with his erudition, and by adopting the persona of an untutored fool, he further obscured his own creative intentions. Yet even though the specific sources of inspiration for his *Ibn il-Balad* (c. 1909) are open for debate, its general allegiances are clear.[6] The plot offers a light riff on a classic New Comic situation, portraying the efforts of a wealthy but hapless young man who turns to a sharp-witted social outcast (played by il-Fār himself) to help him mend his heart and duck his parents' wrath. The tone, meanwhile, rivals Old Comedy in its relish for crudeness.[7] In a typical scene, a clever girl (who has stolen the young man's property and his affections) is rummaging through a policeman's trouser pocket when she discovers a "pump handle"—leading il-Fār to cry out in sensational alarm: "Don't play with it, girl, or you'll get us

all wet!"[8] Such penile drolleries are accompanied by gleeful treatments of growling stomachs, injured limbs, and intoxicated brains. After the young man confesses that his ruin began in the drowsy sloth of a hashish den, il-Fār tries to turn things around with a dose of cocaine, a speedballing remedy that only causes more mayhem. And finally, punctuating the sights and smells of modern Egypt are those most ancient of crowd-pleasers: beatings. When il-Fār goes to grab the clever girl, the young man is disturbed by the thud of a fist hitting flesh, and not wanting the girl harmed, he calls out in concern,

> "Il-Fār! I hear the sound of blows!"
> "Don't worry—that's just me."
> "Why are you beating her??"
> "I said, it's just *me*!" (114)

And sure enough, the young man looks to see that the noise is emanating from il-Fār's cranium, as the girl vigorously punches him there.

This focus on bruised skulls, thwarted hearts, and the other physical problems of life serves as a practical foundation for three of the techniques of comic *demokratia*. First, *Ibn il-Balad* imbues its comic hero—the character il-Fār—with the daring of Pseudolus and the other *impetuosi* of Chapter 2. Like these reckless creatures, il-Fār has no sooner been informed of another man's distress than he offers to help. And like them too, he is immediately punished for his thoughtless bravado. Failing to win back the clever girl, he earns only a brush-off, a thumping, and a flood of laughter. Nevertheless, just as previous *impetuosi* are propelled into unexpected opportunity by their blind rushes ahead, so too does il-Fār discover that his botched antics have brought good luck, steering the female thief into a policeman's path. Fortune has favored il-Fār's boldness, and in keeping with the comic model of *Pseudolus* and *La Mandragola*, our hero's impetuous behavior is contagious. Upon seeing the cop, the girl welcomes him with a fist—a greeting that is promptly reciprocated with handcuffs. Like il-Fār, the girl has charged into trouble, but also like him, she does not despair at misfortune. Instead, she steals the policeman's gun and partners with il-Fār to marry the cop to il-Fār's daughter (or, as our hero less sentimentally describes her, one of ten hungry mouths back home). And so the play draws to an end with a street collaboration that would have made Plautus and Machiavelli smile, as a pair of social outcasts work together to enjoy a laugh, co-opt a cop, and generally lighten the aches and chains of ordinary life.

Second, *Ibn il-Balad* treats happiness in the same way as the indolent New

Comedies discussed in chapter 4, that is, not as an everlasting ideal but as a relief from physical pain. The play begins with il-Fār calling on Allah to lift him out of his wretched state, for "the soul is fire but the body just waste" (92). Allah, however, does not appear. Instead, il-Fār becomes entangled in a pointless argument with the young man over the mark of a true Muslim, an argument that ends only when the prospect of eternal bliss is forgotten amid the problems of their earthly state. Observing the young man's empty pockets and ragged clothing, il-Fār sees a fellow sufferer. The body may be no more than waste, but it is a waste both men have in common, and from here, the play is driven by their shared effort to ease their physical load. Like other New Comic pragmatists, moreover, il-Fār pursues this end not by seeking the good but by knowing how to pick the lesser bad. As he bluntly opines, "Better to be sick than out of work."[9] Here is the hard-knock logic of Roman comedy, and it is one that leads the other characters of *Ibn il-Balad,* all tough-luck creatures themselves, to the same modest view of happiness. Having been beaten by her husband and bullied by the cop, the clever girl has little interest in the romantic advances of il-Fār or the young man. She has learned that the good life consists of escaping men when she can, and rather than searching for a more perfect marriage, her sole ambition is to sneak home for a few minutes of peace.

Third, *Ibn il-Balad* invites the audience—like the audiences described in chapter 6—to revise their native identity by laughing at themselves. Il-Fār begins this effort in his title by declaring himself to be an "ibn il-balad," laying claim to a term that had, since the eighteenth century, served to distinguish true, salt-of-the-earth Egyptians from foreign, ruling populations (whether French, Ottoman, or English).[10] Yet even as il-Fār celebrates the "simple" innocence of the ibn il-balad,[11] he also encourages his audience to smile at the way that this innocence leads again and again into disaster. Unashamed by the technological nescience that the ibn il-balad saw as a sign of earthy virtue,[12] il-Fār makes the gruesome mistake of trying to stop a train by standing in front of it. Aroused by one of the mule-thighed women viewed by the ibn il-balad as the feminine ideal,[13] he surrenders the last coin in his wallet. And possessed by the ibn il-balad's supreme confidence in his natural instincts, he succumbs to thoughtless hypocrisies. For despite il-Fār's scorn for the young man's brand of piety, it soon becomes clear that he is not much of a worshipper either. Upon being asked how many days there are in the week, he declares that there are eight: "Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday" (102). This absurd personal calendar not only

replaces the traditional workweek with an endless Saturday vacation but dispenses with the Friday holy day, and while il-Fār presents an extreme case of fecklessness, it soon becomes clear that he is not the only nonpracticing Muslim around. When the stunned young man asks whether everyone in town enjoys eight Saturdays a week, il-Fār concedes that the more usual schedule is: "Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday" (102). The average ibn il-balad, that is, works. But for all his self-righteousness, he also prefers to skip Friday mosque.

By encouraging *impetuso,* picking the lesser bad, and laughing at one's self-importance, il-Fār's comedy thus joins in the long tradition of comic *demokratia,* and in keeping with this tradition, its antics had a populist purpose. Egyptian playwrights prior to il-Fār had delighted audiences by portraying native servants who got the better of Ottoman kings,[14] and at the time that *Ibn il-Balad* was produced, public resentment of Egypt's current masters had been stoked to incendiary levels by the events at Denshawai. In June 1906, the peace of this rural enclave had been shattered by a group of off-duty British officers who casually began "hunting" the domesticated pigeons the Egyptian villagers used for food. The horrified villagers confronted the British officers, one of whom fled over a patch of desert where he collapsed and died from heatstroke. Outraged by the officer's death, the British authorities responded with a round of public executions that were intended to grind out any insubordination that lingered in Egyptian hearts. Instead, however, the result was a popular outcry and two powerful nationalist movements. The first was the Islamist Watani party, which blamed Consul-General Evelyn Baring and the English government for a rise in divorce, drunkenness, and other behaviors that had corrupted the people's Muslim virtue. The second was the secular el-Umma party, which took its lead from the pragmatic and progressive public intellectual Ahmed Luṭfī al-Sayyid. An admirer of Mill's Utilitarianism, Luṭfī al-Sayyid supported female education, rejected pan-Arabism as a threat to pluralism, and condemned colonialism for being economically regressive.[15] Against the Watani party, Luṭfī therefore insisted that the appropriate response to Denshawai was not to replace English imperialism with an Islamic theocracy but to establish a practical democracy that empowered women and other minorities.[16]

Il-Fār does not wade directly into this debate in *Ibn il-Balad,* but the play's sympathies are clear. Its deflation of religious pomposity and jolly acceptance of human appetite offer a tacit critique of the Islamist Watani, while its rapport with Luṭfī al-Sayyid's pragmatic pluralism can be traced in the stage rob-

bery of the policeman. Policemen were a traditional object of comic abuse, and should the British authorities have taken any notice of this episode, it could easily be justified as idle fun. In post-Denshawai Egypt, however, policemen were also rather more than stage clowns. The Egyptian police were working alongside the occupying government to protect English interests, going so far as to dispatch undercover officers to spy on nationalist rallies.[17] When the policeman's rifle is plucked from his hands in *Ibn il-Balad,* there is thus a winking hint at revolution, a revolution whose specific qualities are suggested by the female character of the thief. If there was one issue on which the Islamist Watani agreed with the imperial Sir Evelyn Baring (who upon retirement back to England would preside over the Men's League for Opposing Woman Suffrage), it was that the fairer sex had no place in government. When the clever girl steals the policeman's gun, *Ibn il-Balad* thus shrugs off both the English and the Watani, aligning itself instead with Luṭfī al-Sayyid's belief that women were key allies in reform. In ancient comic style, change would come through reaching out to new constituencies.

By responding to English colonialism in this way, *Ibn il-Balad* illustrates the first potential benefit of reviving comic *demokratia* today, playfully dramatizing how ancient practices like *impetuoso* and indolence might promote popular power in a modern setting. At the same time, moreover, il-Fār's play also supports the second possible benefit of reviving comic *demokratia,* sketching a way that the old version of democracy can actively reform the new. This is because the oppressor of il-Fār's Egypt was not a tyrant king or oligarch; it was a liberal democracy whose prime minister had risen to power by arguing that government should give "the freest play to individual energy and initiative and character."[18] The English colonizers, that is, were democratic idealists who were deeply committed to the principles of liberty and equality. Yet even so, their prime minister's response to Denshawai was not to concede the need for home rule in Egypt. Instead, it was to replace Sir Baring with the money-minded bureaucrat Eldon Gorst.[19] At first, Gorst attempted to secure England's financial interests with a velvet glove, but when the Egyptians continued to agitate for independence, he became nakedly autocratic. In 1909, the same year that *Ibn il-Balad* was produced, Gorst revived the dormant Press Law of 1881,[20] which gave him the power to suppress, without trial, any newspaper that was judged to have threatened "the interests of public order, religion, or morality."[21] Then, in 1910, he pushed through the Exceptional Laws, which imposed tighter censorship, cracked down on student demonstrations, and outlawed nationalism. And finally in 1911, as he lay dying of

cancer, he watched England's liberal government bequeath his authority to an actual military commander, Sir Herbert Kitchener, a field marshal famous for his use of concentration camps against the Boers in South Africa.[22]

In this imperial context, the old comic techniques of il-Fār's *Ibn il-Balad* acquired a new political function. Having long provided an alternative to Plato's oligarchic idealism, they now offered themselves as a tool for addressing the practical shortcomings with modern democracy's own utopian turn. The first of these shortcomings was the tendency of democratic idealism to breed an attitude of exceptionalism that, in turn, authorized imperialism. This is the tendency that (as explored in the introduction) has encouraged the autocratic implementation of the liberal-electoral model, and in the case of the England's liberal empire, the core mechanics were the same.[23] Having arrived at the view that freedom was the highest human good, English liberals had come to believe that since their own constitution was rooted in this ideal, it must be superior to other forms of government. This in turn led them to conclude that by spreading their government abroad, they were not simply helping themselves but enlightening everyone else.[24] Because of their civic commitment to freedom, English liberals—like the modern proponents of the liberal-electoral model—tried to achieve this end without openly divesting other cultures of their autonomy. Urging their colonies to willingly adopt English political systems and cultural norms, they preferred to work through collaborating indigenous governments that made a public show of welcoming their presence. But beneath this show was an inescapably autocratic dynamic. For whenever the colonized population proved resistant to what English liberals saw as its self-improvement, these liberals did not hesitate—as at Denshawai—to impose themselves through open force.

As the specific facts of Denshawai reveal, moreover, this imperialist result was facilitated by a second shortcoming of democratic idealism: its inability to restrain the physical appetites of its own citizens. Even when the English realized—as they frequently did—that there was something profoundly undemocratic about their colonization of Egypt, their commitment to their ideals proved a weaker motivation than their hunger for material gains. This dynamic is documented at length in the private letters and diaries of government officials such as Sir Baring, which reveal how conscious English liberals were of contradicting their own democratic values.[25] Despite their pangs of guilt, however, these liberals did not change course. Instead, they opted to rationalize their ongoing occupation by claiming that certain unfortunate material realities—the undeveloped nature of Egypt's economy, the moral fail-

ings of Egypt's ruling classes, the primitive character of the Egyptian people—made it impossible to withdraw. This failure of democratic principles to keep empire in check was not, moreover, confined to Egypt. It was characteristic of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European liberalism in general. As historians have noted, Victorian "Liberals . . . professed to hate imperialism . . . [but] often defended particular visions of the empire," so that, all across the empire, the supporters of freedom were caught in the same contradiction as Gorst.[26] French liberals, meanwhile, were no better, nor were the liberals of the eighteenth century or the twentieth. [27]

And indeed, what held true for these liberal imperialists has continued to hold true for democracies in our own time. As recent studies have shown, when democratic citizens are asked to authorize military occupations of other countries, their collective decision is based not on their perception of whether the occupation is consistent with democratic principles but on their assessment of whether the occupation will be materially successful.[28] Modern democratic citizens, in other words, place less weight on the freedom of others than they do on their own political and economic self-interest. This is why citizens in the United States initially supported the invasion of Iraq but turned against it when it became a financial drag,[29] and the same pragmatic logic guides democratic foreign policy in general.[30] While certain individuals may be motivated by an altruistic belief in liberty, the majority are more concerned about the well-being of their nation, and in this, their behavior reflects a feature of human psychology that rubs against idealism in all its forms: our immersion in our own material drives. Supporting what the ancient rhetoricians suspected, modern psychologists have shown that the most powerful springs of human behavior are our fear of pain, our lust for pleasure, our anger, our empathy, our jealousy, our sentimental attachments, our erotic fixations, and our other personal (and generally egocentric) feelings.[31] This biological tendency does not make our rational principles worthless, but it does suggest that, as a general rule, we are more likely to live up to our ideals when they are consistent with our passions. For in cases where the two conflict, our propensity is to incline (with varying degrees of shame, remorse, and self-justification) toward the latter.[32] When this psychological dynamic is extrapolated to the level of democratic communities, moreover, its fleshly consequences become even more explicit. Since democratic decision making involves large numbers of people, and since individual exceptions to general psychological rules become less apparent as sample sizes increase, the com-

bination of democracy and human biology almost inevitably dooms idealism when it conflicts with the public's material desires.[33]

These scientific findings about the biological dispositions of democratic bodies are not, of course, indisputable truths. Because science's method of empirical falsification (as noted in the introduction) is a pragmatic form of materialism, its conclusions fall into the same category as Epicurus's atomism or Machiavelli's description of Fortune: potentially useful contributions to our physical practice, not metaphysical statements of fact. Yet even with this qualification, the rigor and repeatability of scientific studies can make them very useful contributions indeed, and in the case of Denshawai, they join with the evidence of history to suggest that the contradiction that ensnared English liberals in Egypt was not the peculiar circumstance they felt it to be. It was, and remains, a common predicament of modern democracies. For no matter how powerfully liberal democrats believe in freedom as a universal right, this belief has not prevented them from encroaching on the liberties of others. Instead, it has repeatedly marooned them in the same conflicted state as Sir Baring and his colonial government: professing a deep commitment to liberty in their private conversations while behaving imperiously in public; wrestling with the tension between their philosophical values and their national interest before deciding that, in this one unique situation, they need to bend their principles; and, finally, defending themselves from their own consciences by blaming the colonized for not being ready for the challenges and opportunities of freedom. So it is, unfortunately, that the overall tendency of free states—from ancient Athens to the modern day—has not been to promote democracy abroad but merely to promote their own democracy abroad.[34]

This tendency of human populations to be driven by bodily appetite is why Plato dreamed of a tyrannical utopia where the mob would be ruled by a few extraordinary souls whose reason somehow proved the master of their feelings. As il-Fār's play reveals, however, the shortcomings of modern idealism can be more pragmatically addressed by the techniques of comic *demokratia*. The logic of *demokratia* is, after all, untroubled by the usurpation of our political decision making by our ideologically oblivious feelings. Indeed, *demokratia* is premised on this fleshly revolt, for it traces the expansion of the franchise to the public's desire to satisfy its material wants. As the example of *Ibn il-Balad* demonstrates, moreover, this desire can be used not just to grow democratic powers but to restrain them when they swell into empires. By dis-

seminating the techniques of *demokratia* to the colonized Egyptians, il-Fār's comedy counterbalanced one pragmatic democracy with another, mobilizing the Egyptians' material interest against the material interest of England's liberal empire. And though this jarring of local desires created a conflict between democracies in the short term, its long-term trajectory served the bodily ends of both. At the same time as it offered the Egyptian people a practical method for resisting physical oppression, it checked the English from crushing the global diversity that their own nation selfishly needed to grow and endure, promoting a less imperial world not by challenging humanity's grosser nature but by embracing it.

Read this way, *Ibn il-Balad* suggests that the older comic practices can retain their effectiveness in the here and now, and indeed, it seems to go even further, implying that the old practices can be *more* effective than modern democratic principles. If we are, as the old orators reckoned, not the heirs of a higher reason but emotional creatures caught in a material world, then the most sensible future course for democracy would surely be to abandon our utopian present for a more practical past. Letting go of the principles of freedom and equality, we should copy Epicurus and consign idealism to oblivion. In fact, however, this is not the final suggestion of comic *demokratia*. We have seen in previous chapters that techniques like *imitatio* acknowledge not just the benefit of valuing the past but the danger of overvaluing it, and so it is that comedy promotes a less reactionary response to modern democracy. As I will show over the remainder of this chapter, when il-Fār's play is read alongside another comic response to Denshawai, Bernard Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island,* it points toward a practical gain that the old *demokratia* can take from modern idealism: a way to make popular government more proactively inclusive—and so more adaptively successful. In keeping with the pluralist ethic of democracy, that is, the greater comic good comes not from elevating the old populism over the new, but from having past and present work together.

John Bull premiered at London's Royal Court in late 1904, offering its shocked and frequently delighted audience an acid satire on England's imperial psychology.[35] The abuse begins in the opening scene, where the Irishman Larry Doyle remarks that his English business partner, Thomas Broadbent, hails from a nation of caterpillars:

> *Doyle:* A caterpillar when it gets into a tree, instinctively makes itself look exactly like a leaf; so that both its enemies and its prey may mistake it for one and think it not worth bothering about.

Broadbent: What's that got to do with our English national character?

Doyle: I'll tell you. The world is as full of fools as a tree is full of leaves. Well, the Englishman does what the caterpillar does. He instinctively makes himself look like a fool, and eats up all the real fools at his ease while his enemies let him alone and laugh at him for being a fool like the rest. Oh, nature is cunning, cunning![36]

As sketched by Doyle, the Englishman is the worst kind of idiot. Bumbling good-humoredly into your backyard, he acts like a child, only to make off with your actual offspring when you blink. This is a vicious observation, but Broadbent is only too happy to live down to it, proclaiming in a manner at once predatory and inane: "I am an Englishman and a Liberal; and now that South Africa has been enslaved and destroyed, there is no country left to me to take an interest in but Ireland" (8). Cheerily declaring his desire to spread freedom through the world, the Englishman swallows the last bite of South Africa and sets his mandibles on Ireland.

Unlike il-Fār's *Ibn il-Balad,* this critique of England's liberal empire was intended for English audiences,[37] and the play became a runaway hit in London, inspiring such fits of glee in King George V that he broke his theater chair. Shaw thus succeeded in getting the empire to laugh at itself, but even so, as he confessed in his 1906 preface, he suspected that the jovial response of English spectators did not reflect their desire to reform their imperial ways. Quite the reverse. The theater crowds of London had been happy to chuckle at Broadbent, Shaw believed, because instead of getting his comeuppance in the play, the Englishman had rolled across Ireland, mortgaging a country town, earning its parliamentary seat, and carrying off its only heiress. In the final reckoning, that is, Broadbent was "successful" (vi), and as Shaw's characters had themselves discerned, the caterpillar English were only too happy to act the fool if it meant getting fatter in the end.

To convert his imperial spectators, Shaw therefore decided it was necessary to speak their language of pounds and pence, and in his 1906 preface, he drew attention to a commercial problem with empire: "Now in countries which are denied Home Rule: that in which the government does not rest on the consent of the people, it must rest on military coercion; and the bureaucracy however civil and legal it may be in form and even in the character of its best officials, must connive at all the atrocities of military rule, and become infected in the end with the chronic panic characteristic of militarism" (xlvi). Here, Shaw points out that because colonialism does not involve "the consent

of the people," it requires "military coercion," which for all its spit and polish is a deeply ineffective means of maintaining order. Behind the military's puppet show of "civil and legal" institutions lurks a brute with bayonet and gun, and so when the puppets' spell is broken and the brute is forced to march out through the curtain, the results are "destructive" and "hysterical" (xliii). Escalating minor civic disturbances into full-blown social "panic," England's would-be peacekeepers function instead as "alarmists at home and terrorists abroad" (xliii).

As an "object lesson" in this impractical result of empire, Shaw closes his preface with a seventeen-page analysis of the English response to "the Denshawai affair of 1906" (xlvi). The sensible way of handling the riot provoked by the English officers, Shaw observes, would have been to punish the officers themselves: "They should have been severely reprimanded and informed that they had themselves to thank for what happened to them" (l). As for the Egyptians: "the villagers who assaulted [the officers] should have been treated with leniency, and assured that pigeon-shooting would not be allowed in the future" (l). Yet unfortunately, the military ethos of the empire did not permit such a level-headed response. Instead, the incident spawned anger and alarm, until British officials finally concluded that there was "nothing for it now but the suppression of the native newspapers and a considerable increase in the army of occupation" (lix). Military coercion, that is, begot more force and greater, until at last, all reason was swallowed up in violence. And surely this, Shaw dryly remarks, is not what Broadbent and the other good citizens of empire wanted to see. For though they might value Egyptian lives no more than they valued Egyptian pigeons, they must know that civil havoc was not conducive to their balance sheets. If they wished to make a profit, they needed stable markets, and if they wanted stable markets, they had to abandon coercion.

Having argued that "home rule" for Egypt was the only "permanently practicable" way for England to maintain its own prosperity (xlii), Shaw then reinforced this conclusion by reminding his readers of their democratic principles: "if [England's] Empire means ruling the world as Denshawai has been ruled in 1906 . . . then there can be no more sacred and urgent political duty on earth than the disruption, defeat, and suppression of the Empire, and incidentally, the humanization of its supporters . . . the whole Imperial military system of coercion and terrorism is unnatural" (lix, xli). Condemning colonialism as "unnatural," Shaw thunders that it must be our "sacred" duty to dismantle empire from within, engaging in a project of "humanization" that

redistributes wealth and power throughout the world. Instead of treating England's democratic idealism as a challenge to its national self-interest, the playwright thus insists that they support each other. Imperialism is bad for business, bad for liberty, and bad for social equality, and so material pragmatism, liberal principles, and Shaw's own radical politics all demand an end to empire.

Shaw's belief in this convergence of the utilitarian and the utopian was connected to his idiosyncratic hypotheses about human psychology,[38] and although subsequent neuroscientific research has not upheld these hypotheses, it has supported the underlying rhetorical approach of *John Bull*'s 1906 preface. Recent cognitive studies have shown that the human brain is biased toward immediate goods, instinctively preferring small, instant rewards to greater, deferred ones.[39] This emotional bias, known as "hyperbolic discounting," can make a great deal of practical sense in unstable physical environments where there is little point in sacrificing for a future that may never materialize.[40] As we saw the slaves of Roman comedy conclude in chapter 2, it's only logical to defer our troubles if today remains our only guarantee.[41] Yet the history of ancient and modern democracy demonstrates that such crude biological calculations can also have strongly impractical effects. Seducing us into a short-term mentality in which we privilege our immediate happiness over our ongoing health, hyperbolic discounting leads democratic individuals to procrastinate, gorge on calories, and rack up debt; and it leads democratic nations to engage in the self-destructive imperialism that characterized both twentieth-century liberal England and Athenian *demokratia*.[42]

This failure of these democracies to work proactively for their citizens' long-term health is not, moreover, a one-off problem with human psychology. It is a reflection of the biological mechanism at the root of all life: evolution by natural selection. As the intricacy and strange power of the human brain attests, natural selection can achieve extraordinary things, but because it is an eyeless and insentient maker, its creations are never intended to be flawless. Instead, what has worked has endured, and what has endured has been left to struggle on. Like the human spine, which has kept us upright for thousands of years but is so oddly curved that it dooms us all to back pain, *demokratia* is thus both a triumph of blind evolution and an example of why we might be happier with a little intelligent design. Such design would not, of course, make *demokratia* perfect. Given the diverse and ever-changing microenvironments that make up our physical world, there is no way to craft a style of living that would in all cases be the best. But—on the more modest

problem-solving logic of pragmatism—a bit of extra thinking could smooth out the obvious kinks, eliminating imperialism and other antipluralist behaviors that we know, in the long haul, cannot have a successful outcome.

Even when we recognize the material benefits of proactively resisting our urges toward bigotry and dominion, however, our biology does not make things easy on us. We have already seen that our cognitive circuits are less responsive to higher oughts than to bodily impulses, and hyperbolic discounting is similarly wired in. This neural intransigence can seem to abandon us to the melancholy fatalism that gripped the English liberals at Denshawai: products of matter we are, and so we will remain, carried helplessly against our good intentions by the whirring cogs inside our brains. Yet as other psychological research has shown, our future prospects are likely not quite so bleak. Although the deeper regions of our brains are gripped by powerful, self-regarding prejudices that predate the human race itself, the more recent evolutionary enlargements of the prefrontal cortex have given us the capacity to rein our egoistic biases in.[43] This capacity is limited, but it is by no means inconsequential, and so although we are not in a position to fashion ourselves into angels, we can at least behave better in the abnegative sense of not behaving quite as badly. (To be clear, this belief in the possibility of active restraint does not, from a pragmatic perspective, require taking any particular position on the old metaphysical puzzle of free will. As William James and the American Pragmatists noted—and as Machiavelli and the comic slaves of chapter 2 tacitly illustrate—there are only two physical possibilities with regard to free will: either we have it or we do not. If we have it, then it is clearly to our benefit to take advantage; and if we do not, then nothing has been lost by acting as if we do, for we were fated to act so anyway). Abnegative approaches to virtue, as we saw when discussing the Epicureans in chapter 4, have long formed a basis for pragmatic approaches to ethics. And though they may seem distastefully modest in their moral aspirations, their tragic view of human biology does have a comic payoff. By leaving our core nature undisturbed, they preserve a rich vein of popular diversity, allowing us to hold onto the varied psychological appetites that, as Plato observed, function as the ultimate source of democratic pluralism.[44]

In the specific case of hyperbolic discounting, moreover, we have access to a reasonably effective method for restraining our short-term bias. As cognitive studies have shown, by visualizing the better tomorrow that would be achieved by eschewing our immediate appetites, and by then reinforcing this visualization with positive emotions, we can both see and feel that it is better

to moderate our caterpillar eating.[45] This therapeutic practice is not enough to eliminate our greed, which is rooted too deep in the human psyche to ever be thought away. But by aligning our moral sentiments with our long-term bodily desires, it does create a counterbalance in our brains, diminishing the strength with which impulsive short-termism spins the wheels of our behavior. Like il-Fār's *Ibn il-Balad,* that is, it pits one biological force against another, so that even though our near-sightedness remains as strong as ever, its public effects are at least reduced.

Shaw had never heard of this cognitive therapy, but he takes the same approach in his preface. Inviting us to visualize an age of greater economic happiness, and then reinforcing this vision with a sentimental reminder of the "sacred" principles of freedom and justice, he urges us to feel the emotional pull of a future that is at once more egalitarian and more prosperous. The result of this rhetorical technique is not pure idealism, for by acknowledging the pragmatic results of liberty and equality, Shaw's preface preempts the self-righteousness that authorizes democratic exceptionalism (and with it, enlightened imperialism). Yet neither is the result a simple pragmatism, for Shaw's preface presses us to give up the present material goods of empire for a tomorrow that cannot be guaranteed. Instead, the oratorical effect is a combination of the future-looking and the now-reacting. Inspiring our animal nature with an imagination of its better self, it finds a useful practice in our principles.

Shaw, as we have seen, articulated this pragmatic idealism out of a sense of failure. His play had not worked as he had wanted, and he hoped to guide later readers into a more democratic response. But even though Shaw's preface is in some sense a revision of *John Bull,* its joining of the practical and the utopian is not absent from the original play. In fact, it is the dominant mood of the final scene. As the plot winds down, Broadbent begins the "practical business" of constructing a golf hotel that, he declares, will equally benefit the colonists (what Englishman does not enjoy some pre-industrial air and a healthy round of whack-about?) and the colonized (prompting a flood of "money from England to Ireland" [123–24]). Here is the liberal claim that empire is sensible for all, and yet no sooner has Broadbent spoken than he is ridiculed by the Irish ex-priest, Father Keegan. Imperialism, Keegan mordantly observes, has not been good public "business," for although it has "for so many generations taken money from Ireland to England . . . Has that saved England from poverty and degradation?" (123). The empire, that is, may well be rich, but London's streets still teem with poor. Indeed, it is this very blight

that Broadbent is banking on to fund his weekend golf resort, for if England were actually a land of milk and honey, would its gilded citizens want to hop a Friday train and leave?

Like the preface, the play then joins this practical critique of empire with a sentimental turn to greater things. For a man who has seen his people's hopes destroyed, Keegan demands, what relief can come from golf courses?

> When I come here in the evenings to meditate on my madness; to watch the shadow of the Round Tower lengthening in the sunset; to break my heart uselessly in the curtained gloaming over the dead heart and blinded soul of the island of the saints, you will comfort me with the bustle of a great hotel, and the sight of the little children carrying the golf clubs of your tourists. (115)

Here, Keegan exposes the other problem with English colonialism. It is not simply that the meager financial gains of empire, passed on to starving nations through the tips of pre-teen caddies, are economically inadequate. It is that empire breaks our "heart." Where Ireland has endured for generations as a land of myth and romance that stirs our feelings with its whisperings of a greater good, Broadbent and his minions are planning to plow it all under for a half-price Sunday buffet and eighteen holes of sand traps.

In place of this nightmare result of short-term pragmatism, Keegan calls upon the English to imagine a utopia that not only satisfies the immediate appetites of their bodies but promises a happiness beyond:

> In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman. [He goes away across the hill].

As Keegan dreams it, utopia is thus not some other world but "a country" here on earth. It is not a place apart from physical labor but one where "work" achieves its deepest meaning. And it is not a kingdom ruled by an angelic few but a commonwealth where the highest power is "the people." It is, in short, a better Ireland, a land where the romance, sentiment, and three-in-one mystery of Keegan's language guides his listeners to a more egalitarian version of their material state.

Because *John Bull* ends here, with Keegan vanishing into the gloom while

Broadbent undulates off to build his golf hotel, it has often been interpreted as a tragedy.[46] Yet, like Shaw's combative preface, this ending is less a capitulation to its imperial witnesses than a challenge to them. With Keegan gone, no one else is left to oppose the empire's forward march, and so if the play's spectators want what is best for both their wallets and their hearts, they must now be the ones to take responsibility for curbing the caterpillar. The finale of *John Bull,* in short, employs a pragmatic spur to popular action that goes back to the ending of Aristophanes's *Birds*. After summoning a vision of a better world, it kicks the gods off stage, demanding that the audience achieve the dream themselves.

Where *Ibn il-Balad* practically counters democratic idealism, *John Bull* thus practically redeems it, using the sentimental force of fantasy to make our biological pragmatism more proactive. Because *demokratia* is a multifarious and constantly evolving thing, these two responses to idealism are by no means the final word on what the old comedies might do for democracy now, but when read against the broader narrative of this book, they do open up four possible roads ahead. First, they show that the ancient techniques of comic *demokratia* can work alongside modern democratic utopianism, diversifying its practical toolbox and counterbalancing some of its imperial effects. Second, they suggest that comic *demokratia* has not exhausted itself but can continue developing new capacities, including more of the higher-order regulatory functions that maximize individual freedom over the long haul. In the previous two chapters, we have already explored a pair of such higher-order functions—eccentric governance and inclusive laughter—and the pragmatic idealism of *John Bull* works in a complementary fashion. Using emotion-heavy visions of utopia to restrain the short-term bias of our brains, it reveals that while our fictions of the perfect may not lead us into real nirvanas, they can nevertheless stop us from heading down a few unhappy roads.

Third, *Ibn il-Balad* and *John Bull* support an ongoing role for the old comic tools in our scientific times by demonstrating the consistency of comic *demokratia* with modern Darwinism. This consistency is not entirely surprising; as I noted earlier, the scientific method is based in a version of the material pragmatism that guided pre-modern democrats like Epicurus and Machiavelli. Yet the consistency goes deeper than a shared empirical approach, for, as the previous chapters have shown, comic *demokratia* also serves as a living example of Darwinism's most extraordinary and counterintuitive claim: that a blindly reactive, problem-based process can generate complex, diverse, self-governing organisms. Like the human body, which has emerged from the

insentient action of natural selection to boast a web of symbiotic relationships, feedback loops, and multilevel regulatory networks, so have the political bodies encouraged by comic *demokratia* developed a series of stacked and integrated functions that enlarge each other's gains. The valuing of past achievements encouraged by *imitatio* has been diverted from reactionary conservativism by inclusive laughter; the financial prosperity created by eccentric governance has been channeled away from antidemocratic hierarchies of wealth by the pursuit of indolence; the popular strength generated by *impetuoso* has been shunted out of imperialism by the counterbalancing force of a practical democratic utopianism. In keeping with the mechanism of natural selection, moreover, this evolving complexity has not been set down by some master Constitutionalist from above. Instead, it has arisen from the groping efforts of comic authors, the gut responses of audiences, and the pragmatic imitation of earlier successes, so that an apparently miraculous sophistication has been born from nearsighted biological drives.

And finally, the example of il-Fār and Shaw suggests that comic democracies can also continue to evolve in a (slightly) more intentional way. Where the rhetorical techniques explored in the previous chapters are rooted in the same reactive process of growth that has for billions of years driven the insentient development of natural life, Shaw's practical idealism takes advantage of our more recently evolved conscious faculties. Urging us to critically restrain the myopic egoism that leads us to gang up on the weak, overstuff our mouths, and dig our heels in at the thought of change, it purges some of the problems from our problem-solving method, softening our knee-jerk short-termism and opening up a more prosperously inclusive future. Though it may be impossible to reason ourselves into Plato's paradise, a better tomorrow can thus still be partly scripted, and indeed, if *Ibn il-Balad* and *John Bull* are right, it can be rich with the most utopian good of all: hope. To look back from Denshawai at the Old Comedies explored in chapter 1 is to see just how much comic *demokratia* has grown over time. And because this growth has come from problem solving, the hope it stirs is a resilient one. Encouraging us to relish the challenges of today, it reminds us that democracy can work now as it always has, not borne under by our troubles, but created from them.

The Futures of Comic Democracy

Democracy is the worst form of government,
except all those other forms that have been
tried from time to time.—CHURCHILL, November 1947

SINCE THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, democracy has been defended on the grounds that it is more just, more equal, and more free.[1] But in this book, I have joined with a group of recent scholars who have come to believe what the ancients once felt: democracy is also more sensible.[2] Compared to less inclusive, top-down forms of rule, democracies can draw on a richer pool of skills and perspectives, adapt more radically to changing circumstances, and open themselves faster to new ideas. So it is that democracy has established an empirical track record—ancient and modern—of extending the length and the quality of its citizens' lives, making them quantifiably healthier and happier.

Likewise, the justification that I have advanced for comic democracy over the preceding chapters is not that it is perfectly enlightened but that it works. Tapping into the emotional and narrative logics of the human brain, encouraging people to behave in more practical ways, and using audience feedback to fit itself to shifting times, comedy has long proven a successful tool for promoting popular rule. For a form of governance that is rooted in bodily impulses, moreover, comic democracy has shown itself to be a remarkably canny one. Like other biological systems that have evolved higher-order regulatory functions to extend their practical gains, the comic tradition sketched over the previous chapters has developed mechanisms for not only growing public liberty but managing it. As we have seen, the popular freedoms released by Old Comic pluralism (chapter 1), *impetuoso* (chapter 2), *imitatio* (chapter 3), and the pursuit of indolence (chapter 4) can be regulated by eccentric governance (chapter 5) and laughing together (chapter 6), helping to prevent liberty from metastasizing into a reactionary mob rule that endangers minority perspectives and original ideas. Although comic democracies

are not literally conscious, they can thus, in a behavioral sense, be said to look down the road, engaging in practices that work over the long haul to maximize the benefits of their blind, bodily empiricism. And indeed, as chapter 7 shows, they can even participate in one of the most distinctive forms of human intentionality: the use of emotionally laden ideals to check our gut responses from swallowing up the greater good. The result is a mode of democracy that combines the reactive power of *demokratia* with an active capacity to nurture tolerance, curiosity, and diversity, nudging us toward a practical utopianism that improves our long-term odds of happiness in an ever-changing material world.

My evidence for these claims is admittedly much thinner than the evidence presented by recent political scientists in support of the utility of democracy. Where these scientists have measured the rates of poverty across global populations, calculated the economic output of ancient empires, and mathematically derived the public benefits of pluralism,[3] I have more modestly traced the persistence of certain comic practices over time, inferring their effectiveness from their recurrent place in the historical development of popular rule. My method, that is, has been empirical in the weakest possible sense. Like the nineteenth-century naturalists who poked through finches from the Galapagos, beetles from the Malay Archipelago, and fossils from three hundred million years ago, I have done my best to interpret the record of life as I have stumbled onto it. I have not followed modern political scientists in adopting the more rigorous method of the naturalists' latter-day heirs: making predictions and then running controlled experiments to see whether these predictions are borne out.

It is, however, possible to run such experiments on comic democracy. There has been a growing interest of late in the scientific study of literature, and although the practice remains controversial among literary scholars, there are ways to soften the two deepest concerns raised against it: first, that science's method is absolutist and undemocratic, and, second, that to analyze literature in labs is to make the mistake of the entomologist who tries to grasp beauty by sticking butterflies on pins.[4] The first concern lessens when we acknowledge the limits on scientific epistemology that scientists have themselves admitted. Because science embraces a method of falsification, it does not allow us to scale up a ladder to truth but merely enables us to increase our confidence that a particular hypothesis is not untrue. Like *demokratia,* that is, the techniques of modern science are an attempt to make the best of the fact that we are small-minded creatures inhabiting a vast and shifting world, and

so these techniques are no more to be taken as an infallible guide to literature than they are to be taken as an infallible guide to predicting the weather. The second concern, meanwhile, is mitigated by the specific example of the ancient democrats and their plays. As we have seen, comic democracy has itself long been rooted in a roughly scientific approach. Using ticket sales and laughs as empirical measures of success, comic authors and producers have historically treated the stage and the marketplace as informal laboratories for fine-tuning their work. Far from contradicting the literary practices of comic democracy, the experimental method of cognitive science can therefore be a means to continue them, extracting more practical information from their original feedback-driven approach.

In a tentative step toward such continuation, I have collaborated recently on a scientific study that links a comic technique (free-indirect discourse) to a democratic behavior (tolerance).[5] And to facilitate further studies in this vein, every chapter in this book has correlated specific comic practices (e.g., eccentric narration) with measurable behavioral outcomes (e.g., open-mindedness). All of the preceding chapters, that is, make testable predictions, and while the testing of these predictions lies off in the future, there is some preliminary scientific evidence that they are at least plausible. Impetuosity, which was long seen as antisocial, has now been discovered to have practical benefits.[6] *Imitatio* has been linked by behavioral psychologists to adaptive (and even democratic) learning.[7] Epicurus's abnegative theory of happiness has been upheld by research that shows that our brains are not physiologically capable of more than limited satisfaction and that wealth can, after all, breed more pain than pleasure.[8] Governments that include minorities have been shown to have greater "collective intelligence in problem solving contexts."[9] And inclusive laughter has been identified as a therapeutic way for individuals to adapt themselves to change.[10] If future experiments support these early results, they could thus help us further refine the tools developed by the playwrights and orators of the preceding chapters, sharpening our sense of the role that comic forms might play in nurturing democracy.

Yet in the end, no matter how useful a supporting role such scientific analysis might play in comic *demokratia,* there will always be a need for literary heroics. Tomorrow will bring fresh challenges for popular governments and, with them, the need for new works that must emerge from the unquantifiable brew of individual taste and creative inspiration that has always generated art. And so, as we prepare to end this book and leave the comfortable certainties of scholarly retrospection behind, the question now becomes: How are de-

mocracies to develop comedies for the unknown years that come? What practical steps can they take to encourage modern authors to continue the legacy of Aristophanes and Menander, Plautus and Machiavelli, Cervantes and Shakespeare, Congreve and Gay, Fielding and Warren, Irving and Douglass, il-Fār and Shaw? The answer, as I have tried to show over the preceding chapters, lies in this list of writers itself. Everyone on the list, after all, discovered their voice by turning to the past. Douglass learned from the *Orator,* Fielding from Cervantes, Shakespeare from Plautus, and even Aristophanes from some distant Megarian, now lost behind a curtain closed to time. And so if we wish to further their example, we will follow the advice of the old schoolteachers and copy their backward turn, preparing the future of comic *demokratia* by imitating the works of yesteryear. This attention to the comedies of the past is, of course, exactly what a literature professor like myself would be expected to prescribe. As Lytton Strachey observed of Thomas Arnold's similar epiphany that the best way to prepare students for a scientific future was to steep them in the works of ancient tongues, "Certainly, there was something providential about it . . . [Otherwise Dr. Arnold,] who had spent his life in acquiring those languages, might have discovered that he had acquired them in vain."[11] Yet while I cannot deny the myopia of my belief that the path to a better tomorrow lies in perusing the dusty authors I have celebrated here, I hope that the preceding pages have shown the worth in such quixotic humours. They may be bookish, dream fueled, and naïve. But they can also grow democracies.

Introduction · *Modern Democracies and Ancient* Demokratia

1. Aristophanes, *Clouds,* ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1506–7. "τί γὰρ μαθόντες τοὺς θεοὺς ὑβρίζετε, / καὶ τῆς σελήνης ἐσκοπεῖσθε τὴν ἕδραν." Literally: "Yes, because you who study insulted the gods and peered into the place of the moon." The majority of the Greek and Latin texts I cite are publically available online at Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library. Throughout this book, I have relied heavily on the work of previous translators, but in most cases, the specific translations (and the errors they contain) are my own.

2. For a thoroughgoing version of the narrative I present here, see Christopher Hobson, "The Limits of Liberal-Democracy Promotion," *Alternatives* 34 (2009): 383–405.

3. "Democracy is of course a much-contested concept. But in most of the discourse on democratization and in the understandings held by democracy promoters also there are certainly widely accepted notions of electoral democracy and liberal democracy," Peter Burnell "New Challenges to Democratization," in *New Challenges to Democratization,* ed. Peter Burnell and Richard Youngs (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.

4. For a summary of these methods, see Michele Acuto, "Wilson Victorious? Understanding Democracy Promotion in the Midst of a 'Backlash,'" *Alternatives* 33 (2008): 461–80, 464–5.

5. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest* 16 (1989): 3–18; *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992).

6. E.g., Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas That Conquered the World* (New York: Perseus, 2003); *Democracy's Good Name* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007): "Without a major dislocation in the life of the planet, and in particular in the social, economic, and political conditions prevailing in the wealthiest and freest of its societies, therefore, the rise of global democracy . . . is likely to continue" (*Democracy's Good Name,* 243).

7. Perhaps as dispiritingly, emergent democracies such as India and Brazil have made little effort to promote self-rule among their neighbors. Oliver Stuenkel and Jabin T. Jacob, "Rising Powers and the Future of Democracy Promotion: The Case of Brazil and India," *Third World Quarterly* 34 (2013): 339–55.

8. Thomas Carothers, "The Backlash against Democracy Promotion," *Foreign Affairs* 85 (2006): 55–68; Carl Gershman and Michael Allen, "The Assault on Democracy Assistance," *Journal of Democracy* 17 (2006): 36–51.

9. Larry Jay Diamond, "The Democratic Rollback," *Foreign Affairs* 87 (2008): 36.

10. The case for adjustment is summed up by Daniel Deudney and G. John Iken-

berry, who optimistically remark, "Liberal states should not assume that history has ended, but they can still be certain that it is on their side." "The Myth of the Autocratic Revival: Why Liberal Democracy Will Prevail," *Foreign Affairs* 88 (2009): 77–93, 93. The case for more fundamental change is summed up by Milja Kurki, "Human Rights and Democracy Promotion: Reflections on the Contestation in, and the Politico-economic Dynamics of, Rights Promotion," *Third World Quarterly* 32 (2011): 1573–87: "It could be argued that in democracy promotion discourse and practice at present this radical potential of clashing sets of rights is by and large ignored, instrumentalised and de-radicalised because of calls for 'consistency' and a 'depoliticised' conception of right" (1575).

11. Brett Bowden, "In the Name of Progress and Peace: The 'Standard of Civilization' and the Universalizing Project," *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 43–68. As Hobson puts it, "A certain pretense is maintained that the version being promoted is not Western centric. The manner in which (liberal) democracy is understood—its institutions, foundations, values, and so forth—suggests otherwise, however." Hobson, "Limits," 394–95.

12. "This is not the way liberal internationalism is pictured in standard democratic theory . . . But it is the way Western democracy promotion has generally operated over the past 20 years." Laurence Whitehead, "Losing 'the Force?' The 'Dark Side' of Democratization after Iraq," *Democratization* 16 (2009): 215–42, 232–33. This concern has been expressed by scholars from a broad range of critical perspectives, e.g., Vincent Durac and Francesco Cavatorta, "Strengthening Authoritarian Rule through Democracy Promotion? Examining the Paradox of the US and EU Security Strategies: The Case of Bin Ali's Tunisia," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (2009): 3–19; Teivo Teivainen, "The Pedagogy of Global Development: The Promotion of Electoral Democracy and the Latin Americanisation of Europe," *Third World Quarterly* 30 (2009): 163–79.

13. Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, introduction to *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion,* ed. Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–16.

14. As Hobson puts it, "The widespread consensus over the value of democracy interacts with, and encourages, some of liberalism's most unreformed Whiggish tendencies. The contingency and specificity of liberal democracy is forgotten or overlooked, as it is taken as a universal good, applicable to all, identified as the best panacea for the problems developing states face" ("Limits," 397–98).

15. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 119.

16. Raymond Geuss, "Liberalism and Its Discontents," *Political Theory* 30 (2002): 320–38.

17. For radical democracy, see Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (New York: Verso, 1992); C. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); David Trend, ed., *Radical Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Stephen White, *Sustaining Affirmation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Alan Keenan, "The Beautiful

Enigma of Radical Democracy," *Theory & Event* 1 (1997). For popular pluralism, see William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 31; David Campbell and Morton Schoolman, eds., *The New Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). For progressive pragmatism, see Eric MacGilvray, *Reconstructing Public Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); *The Invention of Market Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For Machiavellian populism, see John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For postcolonialism, see, e.g., Adewale Banjo, "The Politics of Succession Crisis in West Africa: The Case of Togo," *International Journal on World Peace* 25 (2008): 33–55.

18. Hobson, "Limits," 400.

19. David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

20. Hobson, "Limits," 400.

21. Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and International Order* (Columbia University Press, 2005), 15–17.

22. This view of pragmatism as a democratic mode of problem solving is articulated by the American Pragmatists, especially John Dewey. For some discussion, see Jürgen Habermas, "Postscript," in *Habermas and Pragmatism,* ed. Mitchell Aboulafia, Myra Bookman, and Catherine Kemp (London: Routledge, 2002), 223–33; James Bohman, "Democracy as Inquiry, Inquiry as Democratic: Pragmatism, Social Science, and the Cognitive Division of Labor," *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (1999): 590–607.

23. E.g., "The demographic situation in the North Caucuses shows both a high rate of birth and a high death rate . . . Unemployment in some republics is around 80% . . . Other related problems that the region faces are: nepotism, security issues, poor hygiene and insufficient medical care . . . there are also huge environmental problems." Charlotte Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucuses* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 7. In contrast, instead of focusing on such physical concerns, when proponents of the liberal-electoral model talk about "problems" with a country, they focus on a lack of respect for human rights, suppressions of free speech, electoral interference, and other issues that reflect a departure from a political ideal.

24. Christopher Hobson, "Liberal Democracy and Beyond: Extending the Sequencing Debate," *International Political Science Review* 33 (2012): 441–54.

25. E.g., "As countries sketch out their roles in democracy assistance, they should draw on the strengths of their own democratic institutions and traditions, borrowing as appropriate from the work of other democracies around the world. The varied European approaches to democracy assistance provide a wealth of experience to consider." Lindsay Lloyd, "European Approaches to Democracy Promotion," *International Journal* 65 (2010): 547–59, 559.

26. E.g., "the empirical reality . . . empirical cases . . . empirical studies . . . empirical perspective . . . historical, empirical . . . the accumulation of empirical evidence . . . for an empirical example . . . first and foremost it consists of hypotheses that can be falsified by means of empirical and historical studies . . . empirical research . . . from the perspective of empirical social scientists . . . underlying this volume has been

an empirical claim . . . direct *empirical and practical* ramifications," in Hobson and Kurki, eds., *Conceptual Politics,* 8, 13, 14, 15, 19, 31, 90, 95, 106, 152, 215, 216.

27. Daniel Chirot, "Does Democracy Work in Deeply Divided Societies?," in *Is Democracy Exportable?,* ed. Zoltan Barany and Robert G. Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

28. As summarized, e.g., in Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge,* ed. I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 184–89. For an example of how falsification works methodologically in scientific research, see Francisco J. Ayala, "Darwin and the Scientific Method," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106 (2009): 10033–39.

29. E.g., Laurence Whitehead, "Introducing Immanent Democracies," in *Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis,* ed. Desmond King, Robert C. Lieberman, Gretchen Ritter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

30. For an example of a case study, see Sheila Carapico, *Political Aid and Arab Activism: Democracy Promotion, Justice, and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Middle East Studies, 2013). For an example of a blueprint, see Beate Jahn, "Rethinking democracy promotion," *Review of International Studies* 38 (2012): 685–705.

31. For the historical moment at which this distinction between ancient and modern understandings of liberty becomes clear, see Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with That of the Moderns," in *Political Writings,* ed. and trans. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Original published in 1820.

32. E.g., Thomas Jefferson, "To William G. Munford," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 31: 1 February 1799 to 31 May 1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 126–30.

33. Moses Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern: Revised Edition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 28. Finley is discussed more in chapter 1.

34. On this, see Paul Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory Under the English Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 55. Machiavelli's views on democracy are explored at length in later chapters.

35. The literature in this field is voluminous, but for a helpful introduction, see Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver, "Problem-Based Learning: What and How Do Students Learn?" *Educational Psychology Review* 16 (2004): 235–66.

36. On how this pragmatic logic allowed the practice of *demokratia* to spread past the literal legal boundaries of Athens, see Eric W. Robinson, "The Sophists and Democracy Beyond Athens," *Rhetorica* 25 (2007): 109–22.

37. Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); *The Rise and Fall of Classical Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

38. This feature of biological life has led even the most rational organisms to engage in what neuro-economists call "hyperbolic discounting"; it is discussed in chapter 7.

39. David Runciman, *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

40. Plato, *Republic,* ed. and trans. Paul Shorey, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), book 8.561c-d. This quote is discussed at further length in chapter 1.

41. Plutarch records that Themistocles's mother was a foreigner from Thrace, and so Themistocles himself was considered half-Athenian, half-alien. Plutarch, "*Themistocles,*" in *Lives II,* ed. and trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 1.1.

42. See, e.g., the calculations in Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

43. See, e.g., the perceptive remarks in Robert D. Hume, "The Socio-Politics of London Comedy from Jonson to Steele," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74 (2011): 187–217.

44. E.g., Laura McClure, "Subversive Laughter: The Sayings of Courtesans in Book 13 of Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae,*" *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003): 259–94; M. S. Silk, *Aristophanes and the Definition of Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

45. Marvin Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 60.

Chapter 1 · The Ancient History of Comedy and Demokratia

1. Aristotle, *Poetics,* ed. Leonardo Tarán and Dimitri Gutas (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1448b23.

2. Quite literally in the case of *The Knights,* in which a character called Demos is oppressed by a grotesque demagogue.

3. Stephen Halliwell, "Comic Satire and Freedom of Speech in Classical Athens," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991): 48–70, 56; A. H. Sommerstein, "How to Avoid Being a *Komodoumenos,*" *Classics Quarterly* 46 (1996): 327–56.

4. For a summary, see Philip Walsh, "A Study in Reception: The British Debates Over Aristophanes' Politics and Influence," *Classical Receptions Journal* 1 (2009): 55–72.

5. William Mitford, *The History of Greece,* 8 vols. (London: T. Cadell, 1838), 3:60, 4:19.

6. P. J. Rhodes, "Nothing to Do with Democracy: Athenian Drama and the Polis," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 123 (2003): 104–19.

7. Ian Ruffell, *Politics and Anti-Realism in Athenian Old Comedy: The Art of the Impossible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Keith Sidwell, *Aristophanes the Democrat: The Politics of Satirical Comedy During the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

8. For a useful introduction to modern efforts to discern the ideology of *demokratia,* see M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure,*

Principles, and Ideology (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1999). For Plato's discussion of *demokratia,* see Plato, *Republic,* ed. and trans. Paul Shorey, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), book 8.

9. Sara Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

10. Plato, *Republic,* 8.557a.

11. This is the subject of Plato's digression into "unnecessary [οὐκ ἀναγκαῖαι] pleasures [ἡδονῶν]," such as gourmet cooking, drunkenness, and lustful sex (8.558d-8.559d).

12. Plato, *Republic,* 8.557c.

13. Plato, *Republic,* 8.557d.

14. In *Republic,* 557b, Plato speaks of Athens as a place "brimming with *parrhesia* [μεστὴ καὶ παρρησίας γίγνεται]," and then goes on to parody (and possibly appropriate) *parrhesia* in 563c, implying that genuine freedom of speech is more characteristic of philosophy than of democracy. See Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements,* 174–76, for discussion.

15. Plato, *Republic*, 8.561c-d.

16. This tradition is chronicled in Jennifer Roberts, *Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

17. "To Pierre S. Dupont de Nemours, April 24, 1816," in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes,* ed. Paul Leicester Ford, 12 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904–5), 11:524. For a discussion of this general phenomenon in the eighteenth century, see Jennifer Roberts, "The Creation of a Legacy: A Manufactured Crisis in Eighteenth-Century Thought," in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy,* ed. J. Peter Euben, John R. Wallace, and Josiah Ober (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 81–102.

18. *Parrhesia* is mentioned remarkably infrequently by the ancient democrats and not always positively. Stephen C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 311–12.

19. R. K. Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation in Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

20. Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece,* rev. ed., trans. Renate Franciscono (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

21. "ἐλεύθερος γὰρ οὔτις ἐστὶ πλὴν Διός." Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound,* line 50. Power is not, of course, a democratic citizen, nor is the character of any play to be taken as the mouthpiece of Athens as a whole. Even so, by defining freedom from the perspective of power, this comment reveals the line of thinking that led Athenian *demokratia* into its policy of imperial dominion.

22. "To imply that free speech was considered a right by the Athenians is, I would suggest, a misconception . . . [they] thought of free speech as something very different: a characteristic of citizens, an attribute which was a sort of side effect of their political enfranchisement." D. M. Carter, "Citizen Attribute, Negative Right: A Conceptual Difference Between Ancient and Modern Ideas of Freedom of Speech," in *Free*

Speech in Classical Antiquity, ed. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph M. Rosen (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197–220, 198.

23. For a discussion of modern views of freedom of speech, see Keith Werhan, "The Classical Athenian Ancestry of Freedom of Speech," *Supreme Court Review* 1 (2008): 293–347. For the ancient Athenian view, see Arlene Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11.

24. As Stephen Halliwell delicately puts it, "democratic 'frank speech,' *parrhesia,* includes (some) freedom to say what is unpopular or offensive." Stephen Halliwell, "Aischrology, Shame, and Comedy," in *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity,* ed. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph M. Rosen (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 115–44, 116. On the shouting down of citizens, which was known as *thorubos* and was perceived to be in the community's greater interest, see Robert W. Wallace, "The Power to Speak—and not to Listen—in Ancient Athens," in *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity,* ed. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph M. Rosen (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 221–32, 223–26. On the "severity of the punishments" prescribed for inappropriate uses of free speech, see D. M. Carter, "Citizen Attribute," 207–8. Famously, Socrates was executed for speaking against the gods.

25. "The Athenians reveled in *parrhesia* and greatly enjoyed verbal attacks on their most popular politicians. But they did not hesitate to restrict free speech if the interests of the community were adversely affected." Robert W. Wallace, "The Athenian Laws against Slander," in *Symposion 1993: Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte,* ed. G. Thür (Cologne: Böhlau, 1994), 109–24, 124. Or as D. M. Carter more bluntly puts it, "At best, *parrhesia* was a privilege enjoyed by the Athenians that sometimes needed to be restricted for the greater good of the city" ("Citizen Attribute," 208).

26. The original phrase in Herodotus is "προεθυμέετο κατεργάζεσθαι." Herodotus, *Histories,* 5.78. Herodotus never became an Athenian citizen but moved to the city in his late thirties (and was perhaps honored with a cash award by the demos and eventually buried there). The original phrase of Athens's founding mother (Phaedra) is "παρρησίᾳ θάλλοντες." Euripides, *Hippolytus,* line 422.

27. See, e.g., Section 2.23 of Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution,* which notes how Athens and its *demokratia* expanded together. Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution, Eudemian Ethics, Virtues and Vices,* ed. and trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935).

28. The Theban oligarchs, e.g., were committed to the principle of *isonomia,* although like the Athenians, they applied it selectively. See Gregory Vlastos, "Isonomia," *American Journal of Philology* 74 (1953): 337–66, 359–60. Raaflaub lists the other equivalent aristocratic versions of democratic principles and notes that even though there was no aristocratic political equivalent of *parrhesia,* there was a social one, and that a more limited form of free speech, *isegoria,* "originated in the context of aristocratic opposition to tyranny." Kurt A. Raaflaub, "Aristocracy and Freedom of Speech in the Greco-Roman World," in *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity,* ed. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph M. Rosen (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 41–63, 41–42, 47.

29. For a thoroughgoing study, see R. K. Sinclair (1988).

30. The differences in participation between *demokratia* and oligarchy are impossible to quantify exactly, but if we assume that the low number of democratic citizens was 22,000 (Sinclair [1988], 116), then practically speaking, this would have been fifty-five times the participation of the Four Hundred Oligarchs of 411 BCE, over four times the participation rate of the "zeugitai" oligarchy of 410 BCE, and over seven hundred times the participation rate of the Thirty Tyrants of 404 BCE. Even by the most conservative estimate, the physical participation rate in *demokratia* was thus many times higher than in oligarchies, and by including poorer males, it incorporated a set of material concerns that were absent from more aristocratic governments.

31. See Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), for a modern calculation of the importance of participation rates.

32. E.g., Joseph T. Siegle, Michael M. Weinstein, and Morton H. Halperin, "Why Democracies Excel," *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2004): 57–71, 60; *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 10; Jack Knight and James Johnson, *The Priority of Democracy: Political Consequences of Pragmatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

33. This revaluation can be traced back to the radical nineteenth-century utilitarian George Grote, who lamented: "nor can we dissemble the fact that none of the governments of modern times . . . presents anything like the picture of generous tolerance toward social dissent, and spontaneity of individual taste, which we read in the speech of the Athenian statesman." See William M. Calder and Stephen Trzaskoma, eds., *George Grote Reconsidered* (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1996).

34. Moses Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern,* rev. ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 28.

35. Robin Osborne, *Athens and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

36. Barry S. Strauss, "The Athenian Trireme, School of Democracy," in *Demokratia,* ed. Josiah Ober and Charles Hedrick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 313–26.

37. John Hesk, *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 163–79.

38. Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 17.

39. For the scholia tradition, see J. Hangard, ed., *Scholia to "Lysistrata"* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1996).

40. E.g., Helene P. Foley, "The 'Female Intruder' Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae,*" *Classical Philology* 77 (1982): 1–21, 21.

41. "πράγματα δεινὰ." *Lysistrata,* in *Aristophanes 3,* ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), line 571. Hereafter cited by line number.

42. E.g., lines 579–86, discussed below.

43. On the role and importance of immigrants in demokratia, see Barry S. Strauss, "The Melting Pot, the Mosaic, and the Agora," in *Athenian Political Thought and the*

Reconstruction of American Democracy, ed. J. Peter Euben, John R. Wallace, and Josiah Ober (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 252–64.

44. M. Shaw, "The Female Intruder: Women in Fifth-Century Drama," *Classical Philology* 70 (1975): 255–66.

45. "τοῖς δὲ σιτίοις / χάριν οὐδεμίαν οἶδ᾽ ἐσθίων: ἔστυκα γάρ," 868–69.

46. On this dynamic, see David Kawalki Roseli, *Theater of the People: Spectators and Society in Ancient Athens* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

47. *Thesmophoriazusae* in *Aristophanes 3,* ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5–11. Hereafter cited by line number.

48. Lines 1130–31.

49. H. D. Westlake, "The *Lysistrata* and the War," *Phoenix* 34 (1980): 38–54, 44.

50. "ἄριστον." *Frogs* in *Aristophanes 4,* ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 763. Hereafter cited by line number.

51. "ἀγαθούς . . . μεγάλων . . . πράγματ" (lines 1041, 1059, 959).

52. "Γενναίους . . . ἠλίθιος" (lines 1019, 918).

53. "φρονεῖν . . . μοχθηροτάτους" (lines 974, 1015).

54. E.g., Dover.

55. "φρονεῖν" (line 1483).

56. "μεμνημένος νυν τῶν θεῶν" (line 1469).

57. "εἰ νῦν γε δυστυχοῦμεν ἐν τούτοισι, πῶς / τἀναντί᾽ ἂν πράττοντες οὐ σῳζοίμεθ᾽ ἄν" (lines 1449–50).

58. For a discussion of how this reaching out for alternatives led the demos to turn on many of its staunchest supporters, including, perhaps most notably, Kleophon, see Ronald A. Knox, " 'So Mischievous a Beaste'? The Athenian 'Demos' and Its Treatment of Its Politicians," *Greece & Rome,* 2nd ser., 32 (1985): 132–61. By joining in the persecution of Kleophon, *Frogs* has been associated with a pro-oligarchic bias (e.g., by Kenneth Dover and by Alan H. Sommerstein), but, as will emerge over the following chapters, such behavior need not indicate a retreat from *demokratia*. Rather, it can be seen as a sign of the short-term logic that led Plato to condemn *demokratia* and that invites its modern supporters to make it more rigorously pragmatic.

59. E.g., John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934). For a discussion of this aspect of Dewey's pragmatism, see Steven C. Rockefeller, *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). For a discussion of why modern psychologists believe that such experience of faith can be practically adaptive in a strictly material universe, see Jesse Bering, *The Belief Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny, and the Meaning of Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

60. "πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν" (line 1501).

61. "ἱεροῦ" (line 775).

62. For discussion, see note 32 above.

63. E.g., Sophocles, *Antigone,* lines 332–42.

64. See, e.g., the survey of research provided by Eric Groenendyk, "Current Emotion Research in Political Science: How Emotions Help Democracy Overcome its Collective Action Problem," *Emotion Review* 3 (2011): 455–63.

65. George Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). The rhetoricians, as befits their pragmatic, materialist approach, were a diverse group that stretched from the Greek sophists to the Roman orators. Rather than treating them as a homogenous mass, I will therefore treat their surviving works as a library of experimental techniques that are justified not by their systematic consistency but by their worldly efficacy.

66. Quintilian makes this point in *Institutes* 6.2.4, justifying it with the claim that the power to touch the feelings is "what dominates the courtroom and rules over all" ("atqui hoc est quod dominetur in iudiciis, haec eloquentia regnat").

67. The attitude of Quintilian and later rhetoricians to comedy is discussed in chapter 3. On Dio Chrysostom, see Kennedy, *New History,* 233–34.

68. This trend has not just influenced scholars of comedy but scholars of literature more broadly. For a general discussion of how the scholarly mainstream has turned away from the ancient techniques of rhetoric, see James Phelan, "The Chicago School: From Neo-Aristotelian Poetics to Rhetorical Theory of Narrative," in *Theoretical Schools and Circles in the Twentieth-Century Humanities,* ed. Marina Grishakova and Silvi Salupere (New York: Routledge, 2015), 133–51; and Angus Fletcher and Mike Benveniste, "Defending Pluralism: The Chicago School and the Case of *Tom Jones,*" *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 653–67.

69. On the relationship between *Ecclesiazusae* and Plato's *Republic*, see, e.g., Benjamin Bickley Rogers, *Aristophanes III* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 13. It is not impossible that the relationship was the other way round (with Aristophanes imitating Socrates), but either way the rhetorical effect is the same. For a discussion of why *Ecclesiazusae* reflects a pivot away from pluralism and into idealism, see Julia Annas, "Plato's *Republic* and Feminism," *Philosophy* 51 (1976): 307–21. For a summary of utopian interpretations of *Wealth,* see Robert Tordoff, "Coins, Money, and Exchange in Aristophanes' *Wealth,*" *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 142 (2012): 257–93. My view of *Ecclesiazusae* and *Wealth* as less democratic than the Ionian War trilogy would by no means be shared by all scholars. See, e.g., John Zumbrunnen, *Aristophanic Comedy and the Challenge of Democratic Citizenship* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012).

70. Menander, *Dyskolos,* ed. David Konstan, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

71. K. Haegemans, "Character Drawing in Menander's *Dyskolos*: Misanthropy and Philanthropy," *Mnemosyne,* 4th ser., 54 (2001): 675–96.

72. P. G. McC. Brown, "Love and Marriage in Greek New Comedy," *Classical Quarterly,* n.s., 43 (1993): 189–205, 203.

73. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1155a30–32; David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

74. Menander, *Dyskolos,* ed. E. W. Handley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), lines 57–68. Cited hereafter by line number. I have been guided in many moments by Vincent J. Rosivach's excellent public translation.

75. "E però lo uomo respettivo, quando elli è tempo di venire allo impeto, non lo sa fare; donde rovina." Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* in *Opere,* 3 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), chap. 25.

76. Cheryl Anne Cox, "Is Sostratus' Family Urban in Menander's *Dyskolos*?" *Classical Journal* 97 (2002): 351–58.

77. Menander, *Dyskolos,* line 320.

78. "ὑπέρπικρον." Menander, *Dyskolos,* line 129.

79. For the history of the relationship between city and country in the centuries prior to Menander, see Nicholas F. Jones, *Rural Athens under the Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

80. Menander, *Dyskolos,* lines 743–45.

81. "Since she's been raised by a rogue-hating [μισοπονήρου] man, she's bound to make me happy [μακάριον]." Menander, *Dyskolos,* lines 387–89.

82. Menander, *Dyskolos,* lines 829–31.

83. Menander, *Dyskolos,* lines 836–40.

84. Menander, *Dyskolos,* lines 713–34.

85. Menander, *Dyskolos,* line 797; line 801.

86. *Perikeiromene,* e.g., deals with the incorporation of marginalized social groups into the polis (David Konstan, "Between Courtesan and Wife: Menander's *Perikeiromene,*" *Phoenix* 41 [1987]: 122–39, 138) and the irreducible plurality of nature (W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Menander's *Perikeiromene*: Misfortune, Vehemence, and Polemon," *Phoenix* 28 (1974): 430–43), while the prologue to *Heros* displays an interest in expanding myth to respond to changing circumstance (Penelope J. Photiades, "Pan's Prologue to the 'Dyskolos' of Menander," *Greece & Rome,* 2nd ser. 5 [1958]: 108–22, 110).

87. On Plautus's rejection of aristocratic friendship, see Lisa Maurice, "Amici et sodales: An Examination of a Double Motif in Plautus," *Mnemosyne,* 4th ser., 56 (2003): 164–93, and Paul J. Burton, "*Amicitia* in Plautus: A Study of Roman Friendship Processes," *American Journal of Philology* 125 (2004): 209–43. Chapter 2 explores Plautus's investment in the politically marginalized, but also see William S. Anderson, "The Roman Transformation of Greek Domestic Comedy," *Classical World* 88 (1995): 171–80, 180; *Barbarian Play: Plautus' Roman Comedy* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996).

88. E.g., the foreign-born courtesan Thais in *The Eunuch* and the slave Davus in *Andria*.

89. Menander, *Dyskolos*, lines 570–73. On this moment, see Ippokratis Kantzios, "'Old' Pan and 'New' Pan in Menander's *Dyskolos,*" *Classical Journal* 106 (2010): 23–42.

90. "Fors . . . quaeque forst fortuna . . . o fortuna, ut nunquam perpetuo es bona." See the discussion of this term (and the two following phrases) in Francis M. Lazarus, "On the Meaning of *Fors Fortuna*: A Hint from Terence," *American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985): 359–67.

91. For an excellent discussion, survey of scholarship, and focus on the importance of the Sullan Constitution, see Harriet I. Flower, *Roman Republics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

92. For an overview, see A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, eds., *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

93. For the narrowing effect of medieval literary theory, see Angus Fletcher, "The Sentencing of Virginia in *The Physician's Tale,*" *Chaucer Review* 34 (2000): 300–308.

Chapter 2 · Fortune Favors the Impetuous

1. Mikael Hornqvist, "*Perché non si usa allegare i Romani*: Machiavelli and the Florentine Militia of 1506," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002): 148–91.

2. "Iddio vi salvi, benigni uditori, quando e' par che dependa questa benignità da lo esser grato." *La Mandragola,* prologue, lines 1–3; 3:141. All citations from *The Prince* and *La Mandragola* taken from Niccolò Machiavelli, *Opere,* 3 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1997). Citations from *The Prince* by chapter. Citations from *La Mandragola* by act and scene. I would like to thank Madeline Puzo for notes on my Italian translations.

3. "A conoscere bene [la natura] de' principi, bisogna essere populare." Dedication.

4. "Né creda mai alcuno stato potere pigliare partiti securi, anzi pensi di avere a prenderli tutti dubii; perché si truova questo nell'ordine delle cose, che mai non si cerca fuggire uno inconveniente che non si incorra in uno altro; ma la prudenzia consiste in sapere conoscere le qualità delli inconvenienti, e pigliare il men tristo per buono." Chap. 21.

5. "Nell'ordine delle cose." Chap. 21.

6. On the historical background, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961).

7. Marvin Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 60. In the words of the sixteenth-century schoolmaster, Nathan Chytraeus, "the personages . . . in comedy are of less account and plebian" (81).

8. *La Maschere* (1504).

9. Sergio Bertelli, "When Did Machiavelli Write Mandragola?" *Renaissance Quarterly* 24 (1971): 317–26.

10. "Quinci nasce che una republica ha maggiore vita, ed ha più lungamente buona fortuna, che uno principato, perché la può meglio accomodarsi alla diversità de' temporali, per la diversità de' cittadini che sono in quella, che non può uno principe" (book 3, chap. 9).

11. E.g., *Discorsi,* book 1, chaps. 9–11.

12. For an earlier sketch of these ideas, see Angus Fletcher, "The Comic Ethos of *Il Principe*," *Comparative Drama* 43 (2009): 293–315.

13. "Se io potessi dormire la notte, se io potessi mangiare, se io potessi conversare" (Act 1, sc. 3).

14. Callimaco, in Act 2, sc. 2: "causarsi questa sterilita da voi, per impotenzia."

15. For discussion of political *impotenzia* in Machiavelli, see Erica Benner, *Machiavelli's Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 60.

16. E.g., *Ecclesiazusae,* lines 465–70.

17. "Ma datemi, se voi avete, venticinque ducati" (Act 3, sc. 7).

18. "Che voi lasciate parlare a me, e non parliate mai, s' io non vi accenno" (Act 3, sc. 2).

19. "Arrivati in casa, noi ce n'andamo nella volta a bere" (Act 5, sc. 2).

20. At the end of the play, Nicia hands Ligurio "the key" (*la chiave*) to his home.

21. "Le donne hanno alla fine poco cervello; e come ne è una sappi dire dua parole, e' se ne predica, perché in terra di ciechi chi vi ha un occhio è signore" (Act 3, sc. 9).

22. "Se non che la madre le disse el padre del porro, la non entrava in quel letto" (Act 4, sc. 8).

23. "*Molto ardite*" (Act 5, sc. 5).

24. "Guarda come la risponde! La pare un gallo!" (Act 5, sc. 5)

25. "Dipoi s'è dato a mendicare cene e desinari" (Act 1, sc. 1).

26. "Ché non hanno mangiato oggi" (Act 4, sc. 10).

27. "Non vedi tu che una donna, che non ha figliuoli, non ha casa? Muorsi el marito, resta come una bestia, abandonata da ognuno" (Act 3, sc. 11).

28. Having offered her wedding vows, she never again utters a sound.

29. "Ni doleres tu, ego dolorem" (line 1320). "*Iratus,*" line 1328.

30.

Lu: Dategliene dieci.
Ni: Affogaggine! (Act 5, sc. 6).

31.

Fr: E voi, Madonna Sostrata, avete, second che mi pare, messo un tallo in sul vecchio.
So: Chi non sarebbe allegra? (Act 5, sc. 6).

Literally, the friar's phrase "messo un tallo in sul vecchio" means: "grafted a young stalk onto the old [tree]."

32. "Bestiale, crudele, nefando" (Act 1, sc. 3).

33. "Sed eventus docuit fortes fortunam iuvare." Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita,* ed. and trans. B. O. Foster, 14 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), book 8, chap. 29, sect. 5. Turnus utters this same sentiment in book 10 of *The Aeneid*.

34. "Fortes fortuna adiuvat." Terence, *Phormio,* ed. and trans. John Barsby, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), Act 1, sc. 4, line 25.

35. C. Stace, "The Slaves of Plautus," *Greece and Rome,* 2nd ser., 15 (1968): 64–77; G. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 250.

36. "Centum doctum hominum consilia sola haec devincit dea, / Fortuna." *Pseudolus,* in T. Macci Plauti, *Comoediae,* ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), lines 678–79.

37. "Fortuna humana fingit artatque ut lubet: / me, qui liber fueram servom fecit, e summo infumum; / qui imperare insueram, nunc alterius imperio opsequor." *Captivi* in *Comoediae,* lines 304–6.

38. "Occidi." Act 1, sc. 4, line 22. Even when Geta counsels bravery, his master can only wail, "I can't do this [Quum hoc non possum]." Act 1, sc. 4, line 30.

39. "Numquam edepol quoiquam supplicabo, dum quidem / tu vives. Tu mi hercle argentum dabis, / aps te equidem sumam." *Pseudolus,* lines 507–9.

40. Calidorus's father cackles that the slave is about to get his comeuppance, while Pseudolus boasts with equal certainty: "If I dare to do this, who could be more daring than me?" (Quis me audacior sit, si istuc facinus audeam, lines 541–42).

41. "Quia illud malum aderat, istuc aberat longius" (line 502).

42. "Immo [servos] multo mavolo quam liberum" (line 729).

43. "Nunc homo in medio lutost" (line 987).

44. "Illud erat praesens, huic errant dieculae" (line 503).

45. *Opere,* 3.93–138.

46. "Dicam aliquid me inventurum, ut huic malo aliquam producam moram" (Act 3, sc. 5, line 9).

47. "Mendicum" (Act 4, sc. 5, line 21).

48. Citations from *La Cassaria* taken from Ludovico Ariosto, *Opere Minori* (Milan: R. Ricardi, 1954), 241–95. Quotes are cited by act and scene, followed by page number.

49. "Per quella fede ho ne le mie spalle, mi pare questa invenzione simile ad uno fertile e mal cultivato campo, che non manco de triste, che de bone erbe, si vede pieno" (Act 1, sc. 2; p. 252).

50. Act 4, sc. 8; p. 282.

51. Ibid.

52. "Alla mia virtù attribuire" (Act 5, sc. 4; p. 295). The practical, populist value of *virtù* will be explored in chapter 3.

53. "Pozione che indubitatamente fanno ingravidare" (Act 2, sc. 2).

54. "Io gliene farò pigliare" (Act 2, sc. 6).

55. "Io non vo' fare la mia donna femmina e me becco" (Act 2, sc. 6).

56. Act 3, sc. 2.

57. "Un pezzo di carne non nata, sanza senso" (Act 3, sc. 4).

58. "Io son in termine con voi, e parmi avere contratta tale dimestichezza, che non è cosa che io non facessi" (Act 3, sc. 6).

59. On why the Catholic Church would not have automatically considered abortion murder, see Martin J. Buss, "The Beginning of Human Life as an Ethical Problem," *Journal of Religion* 47 (1967): 244–55, 244–45. Following Augustine, Aquinas and other Catholic theologians drew a distinction between the formed and the unformed fetus. The formed fetus had an animate soul; to kill it was to murder a human. To abort an unformed fetus, in contrast, was a sin, but instead of being murder, it was more akin to contraception.

60. "E' sono molte cose che, discosto, paiano terribili, insopportabili, strane; e, quando tu ti appressi loro, le riescono umane, sopportabili, dimestiche" (Act 3, sc. 11).

61. "Capitommi innanzi questo diavolo di Ligurio, che mi fece intignere el dito in uno errore, donde io vi ho messo el braccio, e tutta la persona, e non so ancora dove io m'abbia a capitare" (Act 4, sc. 6).

62. Donatus, e.g., claims that the *servus callidus* is a purely comic invention, for what could be more laughable than a slave who succeeds?

63. "Tiengli e portagli teco" (Act 5, sc. 5).

64. "Pur, se credessi alcun, dicendo male, / tenerlo pe' capegli / e sbigottirlo o riti-

rarlo in parte, / io lo ammunisco, e dico a questo tale / che sa dir male anch'egli" (Prologue, lines 67–71). It has been suggested that Machiavelli is trying here to bully his audience into submission, but given the rowdy volatility of theater crowds, this seems unlikely. Jane Tylus, "Theater and its Social Uses: Machiavelli's *Mandragola* and the Spectacle of Infamy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 656–86.

65. See "The Function of Comedy," in Herrick, *Comic Theory,* 36–88.

66. "Nondimanco, perché il nostro libero arbitrio non sia spento, iudico potere essere vero che la fortuna sia arbitra della metà delle azioni nostre, ma che etiam lei ne lasci governare l'altra metà, o presso, a noi." *Il Principe,* chap. 25, 3:187.

67. "Credo ancora che sia felice quello che riscontra il modo del procedere suo con la qualità de' tempi." *Il Principe,* chap. 25, 3:187.

68. *Il Principe,* chap. 25, 3:188.

69. "Perché, se fussino sopravvenuti tempi che fussi bisognato procedere con respetti, ne seguiva la sua rovina." *Il Principe,* chap. 25, 3:189.

70. "Io iudico bene questo, che sia meglio essere impetuoso che respettivo; perché la fortuna è donna ed è necessario, volendola tenere sotto, batterla et urtarla." *Il Principe,* chap. 25, 3:189.

71. *Eunuchus,* Act 4, sc. 1, lines 2–4. On Machiavelli's copy of *Eunuchus,* see Sergio Bertelli and Franco Gaeta, "Noterelle Machiavelliane: Un Codice di Lucrezio e di Terenzio," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 73 (1961): 544–53.

72. Machiavelli discusses this in book 1, chap. 2 of the *Discorsi*. His actual term is "accident."

73. Machiavelli's association of the Roman militias with popular power is detailed in J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). E.g., p. 203.

74. For Machiavelli's influence on "both the American revolution and the Constitution," see Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment,* 462. A thoroughgoing discussion of Machiavelli's role in early modern political thought is provided by Paul Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory Under the English Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2009). Rahe is a fierce antipragmatist, but like Plato's critical analysis of ancient *demokratia,* Rahe's skeptical take on Machiavellian pragmatism is illuminating.

75. As Victoria Kahn puts it, "The interest of Habermas's work—and the even greater interest of Machiavelli's—lies in the attempt to formulate a nontranscendental notion of practical reason that will permit both a rational critique of ideology and the practical arbitration of conflicting but equally valid demands." "Habermas, Machiavelli, and the Humanist Critique of Ideology," *PMLA* 105 (1990): 464–76.

76. This democratic, institution-building Machiavelli is detailed by John McCormick in *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). The phrase "manual of institution building" is from Arlene Saxonhouse, "Do We Need the Vote? Reflections on John McCormick's *Machiavellian Democracy,*" *Good Society* 20 (2011): 170–83, 171.

77. E.g., Quintilian, 6.2.4. See chapter 1, note 64.

78. On the potential of emotion to nudge people into more democratic behaviors, see Eric Groenendyk, "Current Emotion Research in Political Science: How Emotions Help Democracy Overcome Its Collective Action Problem," in *Emotion Review* 3 (2011): 455–63. On the general importance of emotion in democratic decision making, see chapter 7.

79. E.g., Mary Dietz, "Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception," *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986): 777–99.

80. As Adams admitted, "Without the pen of *Paine,* the sword of Washington would have been wielded in vain." For discussion, see Jack Fruchtman Jr., *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Paine* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

81. Craig Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations* (New York: Viking, 2006), 92. "*Common Sense* made Thomas Paine America's first bestselling author. By the end of that year of 1776, between 150,000 and 250,000 copies were sold, at a time when the American population stood at three million." Gordon Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 55.

82. John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography,* ed. Lyman Henry Butterfield, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 3:333.

83. On Paine's general acquaintance with political and literary authors, see Caroline Robbins, "The Lifelong Education of Thomas Paine (1737–1809): Some Reflections upon His Acquaintance among Books," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 127 (1983): 135–42.

84. David Wootton, introduction to *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society: 1649–1776,* ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

85. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense,* ed. Alan Taylor (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 35.

86. Giacinto Dragonetti, *A Treatise on Virtues and Rewards* (London, 1769), 15, 173, 18, 19.

87. In Dragonetti's memorable euphemism for compulsion: "the impulse of forcible motives." Dragonetti, *A Treatise,* 25.

88. Paine, *Common Sense,* 7.

89. The historical record being what it is, it is impossible to know whether Paine was directly imitating Machiavelli here, and on the rhetorical logic of *impetuso,* it is not, practically speaking, important that he was. Nevertheless, *La Mandragola* was available in the American colonies. Adams, e.g., cites it as part of a list of outstanding literary achievements: "the Panurge, Pantagruel, &c. of Rabelais, the Romeo and Juliet of Shakspeare, the Mandragore of Machiavel, the Tartuffe of Molière." John Adams, *The Works of John Adams,* 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856), 3:291.

90. George Washington, *The Writings of Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799,* ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931–1944), 4:318, April 1, 1776.

91. John W. Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

92. John W. Shy, "A New Look at the Colonial Militia," *William and Mary Quar-*

terly, 3rd ser., 20 (1963): 175–85, 182; Stephen Conway, "The British Army, 'Military Europe,' and the American War of Independence," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 67 (2010): 69–100, 71.

93. Shy, "New Look," 182; Michael A. McDonnell, "Class War? Class Struggles during the American Revolution in Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., 63 (2006): 305–44, 305.

94. On the ultimate place of war in *demokratia,* which tends away from physical violence, see the end of chapter 5.

95. For more discussion of this point and an illustration of how *impetuoso* fits into the larger problem-solving dynamic of *demokratia,* see the end of chapter 6.

Chapter 3 · *The* Virtù *of Imitation*

1. Beginning with Harold Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 215–68.

2. As recently as 1944, it had been used to rally the English for a second assault on Normandy. Laurence Olivier, "*Henry V,*" in *On Acting* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 90–105.

3. Richard Levin, "Hazlitt on *Henry V,* and the Appropriation of Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35 (1984): 134–41.

4. This omission begins with Aaron Hill's 1723 revival, discussed below. The line itself occurs at *Henry 5,* 3.3.38. All citations of Shakespeare are from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works,* 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Wells et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). *1 Henry 4, 2 Henry 4,* and *Henry 5* are cited parenthetically in the text as *1H4, 2H4,* or *H5,* respectively, followed by act, scene, and line number(s).

5. William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays,* in *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt,* 9 vols., ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), 1:194. Hazlitt is referring here to the historical Henry 5.

6. Gerald Gould, "A New Reading of *Henry V,*" *English Review* 29 (1919): 42–55, 42.

7. For some examples, see Norman Rabkin, "Rabbits, Ducks, and *Henry V,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28 (1977): 279–96, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 33–63; Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, "History and Ideology: the Instance of *Henry V,*" in *Alternative Shakespeares,* ed. J. Drakakis (London: Methuen, 1985), 206–27; Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V,*" in *Political Shakespeare,* ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 18–47; P. K. Ayers, "Fellows of Infinite Tongue: Henry V and the King's English," *Studies in English Literature* 34 (1994): 253–77. For a summary of this critical tradition, see John Sutherland and Cedric Watts, *Henry V, War Criminal? And Other Shakespearean Puzzles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

8. E.g., Jonathan Hart, "Henry V," in *Shakespeare: Poetry, History, and Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 173–92, who observes the "complicating irony of *Henry V,*" 176. Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 35: "A mysti-

fied spectator-subject is the willing but unwitting source of monarchic power." John S. Mebane, "Impious War: Religion and the Ideology of Warfare in *Henry V*," *Studies in Philology* 104 (2007): 250–66. Linda Charnes, *Hamlet's Heirs: Shakespeare and the Politics of a New Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 57: "The *Henriad* represents a triumphant recuperation of patrimonial logic." Donald Hedrick, "Advantage, Affect, History, *Henry V*," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 470–87, 478. For a summary of other recent work, see Meredith Evans, "Rumor, the Breath of Kings, and the Body of Law in *2 Henry IV*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60 (2009): 1–24.

9. E.g., Richard Helgerson's claim that the play dramatizes "the consolidation of monarchic rule" in *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 238. See also Camille Well Slights, "The Conscience of the King: *Henry V* and the Reformed Conscience," *Philological Quarterly* 80 (2001): 37–55; Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Anny Crunelle-Vanrigh, "*Henry V* as a Royal Entry," *Studies in English Literature* 47 (2007): 355–77.

10. Lorna Hutson, "Not the King's Two Bodies: Reading the 'Body Politic' in Shakespeare's *Henry IV,* Parts 1 and 2," in *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Lorna Hutson and Victoria Kahn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 166–89, 167–68.

11. I would like to thank Daniel Breen for many helpful conversations on the way to these ideas.

12. *1H4,* 1.3.18.

13. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42. For other versions of this idea, see Jonathan Crewe, "Reforming Prince Hal: The Sovereign Inheritor in *2 Henry IV*," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 225–42, 227; and Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

14. Lester Kruger Born, "The Perfect Prince: A Study in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Ideals," *Speculum* 3 (1928): 470–504.

15. John Muckelbauer, "Imitation and Invention in Antiquity: An Historical-Theoretical Revision," *Rhetorica* 21 (2003): 61–88. On the meanings of *virtus,* see Alan Brinton, "Quintilian, Plato, and the *Vir Bonus,*" *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 16 (1983): 167–84, 184.

16. Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

17. "Menander, qui vel unus, meo quidem iudicio, diligenter lectus ad cuncta, quae praecipimus, effingenda sufficiat." Quintilian, *The Orator's Education [Institutio Oratoria],* ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 10.1.69.

18. Richard F. Hardin, "Encountering Plautus in the Renaissance: A Humanist Debate on Comedy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007): 789–818, 792–93.

19. "*Giovare . . . giovanetti . . . essempli*" "la avarizia d'uno vecchio, il furore d'uno inamorato, l'inganni d'uno servo, la gola d'uno parassito, la miseria d'uno povero, l'ambizione d'uno ricco, le lusinghe d'una meretrice, la poca fede di tutti gli uomini."

Niccolò Machiavelli, *La Mandragola,* in *Opere,* 3 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), preface.

20. "Ut cibos mansos ac prope liquefactos demittimus, quo facilius digerantur, ita lectio non cruda, sed multa iteratione mollita et velut confecta, memoriae imitationique tradatur." Quintilian 10.1.19.

21. Franciscus Robortellus, "On Comedy (1548)," trans. Marvin Herrick, in Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 227–39, 234.

22. Juan Luis Vives, *Vives: On Education: A Translation of the De trandendis disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives,* trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 190.

23. "Nam cum sint duo genera decertandi, unum per disceptationem, alterum per vim, cumque illud proprium sit hominis, hoc beluarum, confugiendum est ad posterius, si uti non licet superiore." Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis,* trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 1.11.34.

24. "Dovete adunque sapere come sono dua generazione di combattere: l'uno con le leggi, l'altro con la forza: quel primo è proprio dello uomo, quel secondo delle bestie: ma, perché el primo molte volte non basta, conviene ricorrere al secondo." Chapter 18. For discussion, see James Jackson Barlow, "The Fox and the Lion: Machiavelli Replies to Cicero," *History of Political Thought* 20 (1999): 627–45.

25. "Sendo adunque uno principe necessitato sapere bene usare la bestia, debbe di quelle pigliare la golpe e il lione; perché il lione non si defende da' lacci, la golpe non si difende da' lupi." Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe,* in *Opere,* 3 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), chap. 18.

26. Eugene Garver, "After Virtu: Rhetoric, Prudence, and Moral Pluralism in Machiavelli," in *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice,* ed. Robert Hariman (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 67–97.

27. Not to mention, of course, the ancient comic part with which Falstaff is most obviously associated: the *miles gloriosus,* or cowardly soldier.

28. The senior Henry is referred to as "the sun" at the end of *Richard II* (4.1.251), and in his tavern performance, Falstaff summons the conventional association of kings and heavenly bodies: "Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove micher and eat blackberries?" (*1H4,* 2.4.407–8).

29. *1H4,* 2.4.398–99; *1H4,* 2.4.415–17. For the king's self-pity, see his speculation that the prince's behavior is "a scourge for me" (*1H4,* 3.2.7). His labored repetitions begin early, with the "No mores" of his opening oration. As discussed below, this formulation was seen as so awkward in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that it was heavily edited and even eliminated in performance.

30. Gary Remer, "Rhetoric as a Balancing of Ends: Cicero and Machiavelli," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 42 (2009): 1–28.

31. "Imitatio autem (nam saepius idem dicam) non sit tantum in verbis. illuc intendenda mens, quantum fuerit illis viris decoris in rebus atquepersonis, quod consilium, quae dispositio, quam Omnia . . . ad victoriam spectent" (Quintilian 10.2.27).

32. Vives, *Vives,* 195, emphasis added. The same view is expressed in Machiavelli,

The Prince, chap. 25, and Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings,* ed. A. H. T. Levi, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 444.

33. Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 267. In the Middle Ages, this emphasis was temporarily replaced by a tradition that treated imitation strictly as a replication of form. For a broad discussion of this phenomenon, see R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 197, and Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

34. Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum,* 15 vols., ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (London: Longmans, 1879), 1:290. The original Latin reads: "maxime autem si imitetur calorem solis in inaequalitate, postremo si moram patienter toleret (non certe eam quae sit proportionata operibus solis, sed largiorem quam homines adhibere solent in operibus ignis), is facile missam faciet heterogeniam illam caloris, et vel tentabit vel exaequabit vel in aliquibus vincet opera solis, per calorem ignis."

35. "Adde quod plerumque facilius est plus facere quam idem. Tantam enim difficultatem habet similitude" (Quintilian, 10.2.10).

36. In addition to Kahn, see Hugh Grady, "Shakespeare's Links to Machiavelli and Montaigne: Constructing Intellectual Modernity in Early Modern Europe," *Comparative Literature* 52 (2000): 119–42; Alessandra Petrina, "The Travels of Ideology: Niccolò Machiavelli at the Court of James VI," *Modern Language Review* 102 (2007): 947–59; L. Arnold Weissberger, "Machiavelli and Tudor England," *Political Science Quarterly* 42 (1927): 589–607.

37. Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne.*

38. "In the popular mind he became a symbol, at first for all that was evil, immoral, and anti-Christ" (Irving Ribner, "The Significance of Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel,*" *Modern Language Quarterly* 10 [1949]: 153–57, 156). See also Antonio D'Andrea, "The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel," *Renaissance Quarterly* 23 (1970): 397–411.

39. Innocent Gentillet, *A Discourse upon the Meanes of Wel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome, or other Principalitie,* trans. Simon Patericke (London, 1602), Aii, Yiiii.

40. Victoria Kahn notes that, "literary representations of the Machiavel [identify him as] a figure of hypocrisy, rhetoric, and, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tyranny"; see Kahn, "Revising the History of Machiavellism: English Machiavellism and the Doctrine of Things Indifferent," *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (1993): 526–61, 526–27.

41. Gentillet, *A Discourse upon the Meanes,* 100–106.

42. Christopher Marlowe, *The famous tragedy of the rich Jew of Malta* (London, 1633), B. Originally produced c. 1592.

43. Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

44. T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's small Latine & lesse Greeke,* 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944); Foster Watson, *The English Grammar School to 1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908).

45. Lars Engle, *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of his Time* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993).

46. Machiavelli, *The Prince,* chap. 6.

47. "Perché in Severo fu tanta virtù, che, mantenendosi soldati amici, ancora che populi fussino da lui gravati, possé sempre regnare felicemente." Machiavelli, *Il Principe,* chap. 19.

48. "Di modesta vita, amatori della iustizia, nimici della crudeltà, umani e benigni." Machiavelli, *Il Principe,* chap. 19. Machiavelli notes that two of the three Roman emperors who possessed these qualities came to an unfortunate end, but the third, Marcus, flourished.

49. On the origins of this comic attitude, see the discussion of *Frogs* in chapter 1.

50. "Neque id statim legenti persuasum sit omnia quae optimi auctores dixerint utique esse perfecta. Nam et labuntur aliquando et oneri cedunt et indulgent ingeniorum suorum voluptati, nec semper intendunt animum." Quintilian 10.1.24. For clarity, I use "humor" throughout this book in its colloquial sense and "humour" in the technical sense of a psychological characteristic or disposition.

51. For a dramatic portrayal of Henry's transition in this scene, see Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film version of *Henry 5*.

52. Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, "Gender and Nation: Anticipations of Modernity in the Second Tetralogy," in *Shakespeare, Feminism, and Gender,* ed. Kate Chedgzoy (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 93–114.

53. Hilton Kelliher, "Contemporary Manuscript Extracts from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1,*" *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 1 (1989): 144–82, 157–58.

54. Samuel Johnson, ed., *The plays of William Shakespeare,* 8 vols. (London, 1765), 4:361, note 2.

55. Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare (1811)," in *Romantic Critical Essays,* ed. David Bromwich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 56–70, 58.

56. Paul C. Edwards, "Elocution and Shakespeare: An Episode in the History of Literary Taste," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35 (1984): 305–14; Richard C. Boys, "The Beginnings of the American Poetical Miscellany, 1714–1800," *American Literature* 17 (1945): 127–39.

57. Johnson famously responded to the Continental Congress by declaring the need for "English superiority and American obedience"; see Samuel Johnson, *Taxation No Tyranny* (London, 1775). For the phrase "matchless image," see Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare,* 2 vols. (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807), v.

58. William Enfield, *The Speaker* (London, 1782), A2. He then identifies his own textbook as "useful," "practicable," and "practical" (v, vi, vii).

59. John Bell, "Advertisement," in *Introduction to Shakespeare's Plays* (London: John Bell, 1773), 7.

60. (*London) World* 865, Tuesday, October 13, 1789.

61. Johnson, *The plays of William Shakespeare,* 4:450.

62. Aaron Hill, *King Henry the Fifth: or, the conquest of France, by the English. A tragedy* (London: 1723), 55.

63. On October 3, 1778, he remarked that until the British conquered the Continental Army, "the Superstructure they have been endeavoring to raise, like the baseless fabric of a vision falls to nothing" (*The Writings of George Washington,* ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890], 7:205). Washington is quoting Prospero in *The Tempest,* 4.1.151: "like the baseless fabric of this vision."

64. George Washington owned a copy of *Henry 5* as part of his complete works of Shakespeare, and it is possible that he saw a pre-Revolutionary performance of *1 Henry 4*. On the record of Washington's theatergoing, see Paul Leicester Ford, *Washington and the Theatre* (New York: The Dunlap Society, 1899).

65. *The Writings of George Washington,* 10:331, emphasis added. He delivered the speech on November 2, 1783. The phrase "band of Brothers" was a popular one in the Continental Army. As Washington remarked in his letter of September 6, 1780, to Gen. Anthony Wayne: "in the Emphatical terms of your and General Irvine's Letter, of which you enclosed a copy, Let all be as a band of Brothers" (8:424).

66. Lucian, "The Ignorant Book-Collector," in *The Works of Lucian,* trans. A. M. Harmon, 8 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 3:173–211.

67. Most aggressively in Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). For summary, see Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1–10.

68. Brad McAdon, "Plato's Denunciation of Rhetoric in the 'Phaedrus,'" *Rhetoric Review* 23 (2004): 21–39, 34.

69. John Hay, *Inside Lincoln's White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay,* ed. Michael Burlingame and John R. Turner Ettlinger (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 128.

70. James Hackett, *Notes, Criticisms, and Correspondence upon Shakespeare's Plays and Actors* (New York: Carleton, 1863), 350–51.

71. Thomas G. Sauer, *A. W. Schlegel's Shakespearean Criticism in England, 1811–1846* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

72. *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare, with Notes, original and selected,* ed. Samuel Weller Singer, 10 vols. (Chiswick: Charles Whittingham, 1826), 5:393.

73. Typically in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, democratic idealism was preceded by (or mixed with) various forms of republican idealism, which (in keeping with the utopian logic of the ideal) further minimized the role of popular diversity in good government.

74. James A. Henretta, *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States, 1750 to 1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 64. Schlegel's exact words in his 1796 *Versuch über den republikanismus* are: "Der Republikanismus

ist also notwendig demokratisch . . . Nur universeller und vollkommener Republikanismus würde ein gültiger, aber auch allein hinlänglicher Definitivartikel zum ewigen Frieden sein." In the wake of the French Revolution, Schlegel would (like many Romantics) renounce his more radical views on democracy for a more cautious republicanism.

Chapter 4 · The Pursuit of Indolence

1. Julian P. Boyd, *The Declaration of Independence: The Evolution of the Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945); Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 97–105.

2. *Journals of The American Congress from 1774 to 1788,* 4 vols. (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), 1:19–21, 20.

3. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 1: 1760–1776,* ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 423–28.

4. *Virginia Declaration of Rights* (1776), section 1.

5. Darrin M. McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Grove, 2006). On Jefferson's era in particular, see 314–31.

6. For a survey of Jefferson's relationship to Epicurus's ethics, see M. Andrew Holowchak, "The 'Reluctant' Politician: Thomas Jefferson's Debt to Epicurus," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45 (2012): 277–97.

7. Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to William Short, 31 October 1819," in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson,* ed. Paul Leicester Ford, 10 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 10:143.

8. Jefferson, "Syllabus of the doctrines of Epicurus," in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson,* 10:146.

9. "Τὸ γὰρ ποιουν ἀνυπέρβλητον γηθος τὸ παρ᾽ αὐτὸ πεφυγμένον μέγα κακόν. καὶ αύτη φύσις ἀγαθου." *Epicurus: The Extant Remains, ed.* Cyril B Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), fragment 61, p. 134.

10. "σαρκὸς δὲ φωνή μὴ πεινην, μὴ διψην, μὴ ῥιγουν." Epicurus, fragment 44. Modern scholars such as Julia Annas, Phillip Mitsis, and John Cooper have challenged this reading of Epicurus as a strict pragmatist, but their claim that Epicurus was at least occasionally idealistic was unknown in Jefferson's day. Moreover, like David Sedley, Tim O'Keefe, Raphael Woolf, and other recent scholars who disagree with Annas, Mitsis, and Cooper, I tend to the view that a pragmatic interpretation of Epicurus better captures what is distinctive about his ethics. E.g., David Sedley, "The Inferential Foundations of Epicurean Ethics," in *Ethics,* ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 129–50, 148–50; Tim O' Keefe, "Is Epicurean Friendship Altruistic?" *Apeiron* 34 (2001): 269–305, 273; Raphael Woolf, "What Kind of Hedonist Was Epicurus?" *Phronesis* 49 (2004): 303–22, 322. Jefferson's Epicurus, in short, may well have been the original Epicurus.

11. E.g., Sedley, "Inferential Foundations," 148–50; Jeffrey Fish, "Not All Politicians Are Sisyphus: What Roman Epicureans Were Taught about Politics," in Jeffrey Fish and Kirk Sanders, eds., *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition* (Cambridge: Cam-

bridge University Press, 2009), 72–104, 89–90. Like many other pragmatists, Epicurus was not opposed to treating certain forms (and degrees) of virtue as an instrumental good; see the end of chapter 7 for further discussion.

12. Tim O'Keefe, "The Epicureans on Happiness, Wealth, and the Deviant Craft of Property Management," in *Economics and the Virtues,* ed. Jennifer Baker and Mark White (forthcoming from Oxford University Press).

13. For Epicurus's views on spouses, see Tad Brennan, "Epicurus on Sex, Marriage and Children," *Classical Philology* 91 (1996): 346–52.

14. Jefferson, "Syllabus," 10:146.

15. Catherine Wilson, "Epicureanism in Early Modern Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism,* ed. James Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 266–86; Richard Kroll, *The Material Word: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

16. James Warren, *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 200. In general, the ancient Greeks saw ethics (not physics or metaphysics) as the overarching object and justification for intellectual inquiry.

17. James Warren, "Removing Fear," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism,* ed. James Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 234–48; James Warren, *Facing Death: Epicurus and His Critics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Tim O'Keefe, "Lucretius on the Cycle of Life and the Fear of Death," *Apeiron* 36 (2003): 43–65.

18. Jerome D. Quinn, "Menander and His Proverbs," *Classical Journal* 44 (1949): 490–94. It is of course possible that influence flowed the other way, and that Epicurus was inspired by the longstanding pragmatism of comedy when crafting his own problem-based ethics.

19. "ἀεὶ τὸ λυπουν ἀποδìωκε του βìου." Menander, *The Principal Fragments,* trans. by F. G. Allinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 433.

20. E.g., Smikrines in *Apsis* and *Epitrepontes.*

21. Lines 3, 3, 27, 30.

22. After a young man says, "sum miser [I am miserable]," the hoarder replies, "Immo ego sum [I am (miser) too]."

23. Epicurus, fragment 73.

24. Perikeiromene, line 807. Menander, *The Principle Fragments,* 278.

25. *The Odyssey,* book 4, line 221. The term ἐπίληθον is used to refer to a drug that allows a man to forget the pain of losing his parents or even the sight of his own murdered child.

26. C. R. Post, "The Dramatic Art of Menander," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 24 (1913): 111–45, 127.

27. See Aristotle, *Poetics,* ed. Leonardo Tarán and Dimitri Gutas (Leiden: Brill, 2013), chap. 13.

28. E.g., "Life now is the same as it always was" (Epicurus, fragment 55); "If you aren't happy with a little, you won't ever be satisfied" (Epicurus, fragment 69).

29. Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights,* ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 17.4.

30. On the politics of the Epicureans, see Fish, "Not All Politicians," 101–2; David Sedley, "Epicureanism in the Roman Republic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism,* ed. James Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29–45, 44. In general, the Epicureans eschewed political theorizing, but, as I have suggested in previous chapters, this attitude was not incompatible with *demokratia* and, indeed, was frequently characteristic of its practical approach.

31. On the Garden and Epicurus's general relationship with his early followers, see Diskin Clay, "The Epicurean Garden," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism,* ed. James Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9–28.

32. M. Leiwo and P. Remes, "Partnership of Citizens and Metics: The Will of Epicurus," *Classical Quarterly,* n.s., 49 (1999): 161–66.

33. W. R. Albury, "Halley's Ode on the Principia of Newton and the Epicurean Revival in England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 (1978): 24–43; Don Cameron Allen, "The Rehabilitation of Epicurus and His Theory of Pleasure in the Early Renaissance," *Studies in Philology* 41 (1944): 1–15; Edwin Greenlaw, "Spenser and Lucretius," *Studies in Philology* 17 (1920): 439–64.

34. Titus Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura* (Amsterdam, 1620); Ben Jonson, *Works,* ed. C. H. Hereford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 1.255–58.

35. Ben Jonson, *Euery man in his humor* (London, 1601), G 4.

36. *Ben Jonson*, *Timber, Or Discoveries,* in *Works,* ed. C. H. Hereford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vol. 8.

37. Ben Jonson, *Bartholmew fayre: a comedie, acted in the yeare, 1614* (London, 1631), 17.

38. Kevin J. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 607.

39. On this familiarity, see Thomas Franklin Mayo, *Epicurus in England, 1650–1725* (Dallas: Southwest Press, 1934); Kroll, *The Material Word*; Charles Trawick Harrison, "The Ancient Atomists and English Literature of the Seventeenth Century," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 45 (1934): 1–79.

40. "The Contents in the Scheme." This phrase is repeated several times, including on page 22.

41. Abraham Cowley, *Cutter of Coleman-Street. A Comedy* (London, 1663), preface, A 5.

42. Abraham Cowley, *The Guardian, a comedie* (London, 1650), Act 5, sc. 13, F 3.

43. The apologist in this case was John Dryden. For an account of the Dryden-Shadwell relationship, see R. Jack Smith, "Shadwell's Impact upon John Dryden," *Review of English Studies* 20 (1944): 29–44.

44. He notes that he has been inspired by "the practise of *Ben Johnson,* whom I think all Drammatick *Poets* ought to imitate." Thomas Shadwell, *The Sullen Lovers, or The Impertinents* (London, 1668), A 2.

45. For the Lucretian precedent, see, e.g., *De Rerum Natura*, book 2, lines 1093–

1104, which describe the total tranquility of divine existence (*tranquillia pace,* line 1093) and a god who retires into deserted space (*in deserta recedens,* line 1102).

46. Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso* (London, 1676), 1. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things,* trans. W. H. D. Rouse, rev. M. F. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), book 1, lines 44 to 49.

47. Nicholas Fisher and Matt Jenkinson, "Rochester and the Specter of Libertinism," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70 (2007): 537–52.

48. Alastair Small and Carola Small, "John Evelyn and the Garden of Epicurus," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1997): 194–214, 212; John F. Moore, "The Originality of Rochester's Satyr against Mankind," *PMLA* 58 (1943): 393–401, 400.

49. For a helpful synopsis of the Epicureans' theological views, see Jaap Mansfeld, "Aspects of Epicurean Theology," *Mnemosyne,* 4th ser., 46 (1993): 172–210.

50. David M. Vieth, *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 35.

51. "Bona civilia voco vitam, libertatem, corporis integritatem, et indolentiam, et rerum externarum possessions, ut sunt latifundia, pecunia, supellex &c." For discussion, see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Toleration: And Other Writings on Law and Politics, 1667–1683,* ed. J. R. Milton and Philip Milton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32.

52. Locke himself has typically been seen as an opponent of Epicureanism, e.g., Mitsis, *Epicurus' Ethical Theory: The Pleasures of Invulnerability* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

53. Locke, *An Essay,* 32 (emphasis added).

54. Shadwell, *The Virtuoso,* 38.

55. William Shakespeare, *Much Adoe about Nothing* (London, 1600), J.

56. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things,* book 4, lines 1076, 1084.

57. Aya Betensky, "Lucretius and Love," *Classical World* 73 (1980): 291–99.

58. E.g., *The Sullen Lovers* and *The Virtuoso*.

59. Richard W. F. Kroll, "Discourse and Power in the Way of the World," *ELH* 53 (1986): 727–58, 755. Kroll cites John C. Hodges, ed., *The Library of William Congreve* (New York: New York Public Library, 1955).

60. William Congreve, *The Way of the World* (London, 1700), 57.

61. On the broad pragmatism of Farquhar's comedies, see Derek Hughes, "Body and Ritual in Farquhar," *Comparative Drama* 31 (1997): 414–35.

62. George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer* (London, 1736), 31.

63. George Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem* (London, 1736), 87.

64. "From our example, may all be taught to fly the first approach of vice." George Lillo, *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell* (London: John Bell, 1780), 60.

65. Odai Johnson and William J Burling, eds., *The Colonial American Stage, 1665–1774* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 64.

66. *Federal Gazette,* June 6, 1792, p. 2. On the place of *The Beaux Stratagem* in the

postwar repertoire, see Thomas A. Bogar, "The Origins of Theatre in the District of Columbia, 1789–1800," *Washington History* 22 (2010): 4–16, 11.

67. *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson,* ed. E. Millicent Sowerby, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1952–59), 4:561.

68. "Letter to Jonathan Swift, October 22, 1727," in Lewis Melville, *John Gay* (London: Daniel O'Connor, 1921), 71.

69. "Letter to Alexander Pope, Feb/March 1729," in Melville, *John Gay,* 107.

70. John Gay, "Wine," in *The Poetical Works of John Gay,* 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Apollo Press, 1777), 2:175, lines 121–22.

71. John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera* (London, 1729), B.

72. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura,* book 5. Lucretius claims that out of this natural pleasure came the second kind of music, more sophisticated and refined, yet no more pleasing. Indeed, instead of satisfying people in the old way, it "altered their perceptions [*immutat sensus*]" (1415), breeding new discontents. As Charleton put it in *Epicurus' Ethics,* "the musick of wild notes" had been supplanted by "very strong Allurements and Incentives to Lust" (95, 85).

73. E.g., Menander's *The Arbitrants,* which concludes with a fortunate swerve into a happy ending.

74. "To Jonathan Swift, February 15, 1727–8," in *Letters Written by the Late Jonathan Swift,* ed. John Hawkesworth, 2 vols. (Dublin: James Williams, 1767), 2:157.

75. *Columbian Centinel* 22, no. 21 (November 19, 1794): 2.

76. E.g., *Massachusetts Spy* 1, no. 14 (June 6, 1771), p. 56.

77. *Boston News-Letter* (January 23, 1766), p. 3 (emphasis added). On this revival generally, see Johnson and Burling, *The Colonial American Stage,* 366.

78. "Letter to Nathaniel Burwell, March 14, 1818," in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes,* ed. Paul Leicester Ford, 12 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904–5), 12:90–93, 92.

79. For this detail and how "in music, Jefferson was letting his tastes drift from the man-made and rule-governed to the natural," see Hayes, *The Road to Monticello,* 113.

80. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello,* 607, 127. On Farquhar, also see 222.

81. "Thomas Jefferson to John Minor, August 30, 1814," in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series,* ed. J. Jefferson Looney, 12 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 625–31. In the letter, Jefferson claims that he has been making this recommendation since roughly 1765.

82. For Menander, see *Dyskolos,* ed. David Konstan, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), lines 797–800. For Farquhar, see *Beaux Stratagem,* 90.

83. John Adams, "Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States," in *The Works of John Adams,* ed. Charles Francis Adams, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1850–56), 6:8–9.

84. Ibid.

85. Robert Stanley, *Dimensions of Law in the Service of Order: Origins of the Federal Income Tax, 1861–1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For how this

trend is in danger of reversing itself, see Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Belknap, 2014).

86. *Providence Gazette* 21, no. 1045 (January 10, 1784): 3.

87. William Lloyd Garrison, "To the Public," *Liberator* 1 (January 1, 1831).

88. E.g., "Selection from the Liberty Bill: Come and Do it Better," *North Star* 1, no. 9 (February 25, 1848): 4; "Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies," *North Star* 1, no. 23 (June 2, 1848): 2; "No Colonization," *North Star* 2, no. 34 (August 17, 1849): 2.

89. Frederick Douglass, "Intemperance and Slavery: An Address Delivered in Cork, Ireland, on October 20, 1845," *Truth Seeker* 1 (1846): 142–44.

Chapter 5 · Quixotic Governance

1. David Lundberg and Henry F. May, "The Enlightened Reader in America," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 262–93.

2. "La decadence des Deux Empires, Le Romain et le Britannique, s'avancent à pas égaux." J. E. Norton, ed., *The Letters of Edward Gibbon,* 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 2:218.

3. "Arte Nuevo Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo," in Lope de Vega, *Operas Completas,* 41 vols. (Madrid: Biblioteca Castro, 1997–2008), 37:242–53, lines 149, 178.

4. For de Vega's own list of humours, see his Latin poem at the end.

5. Miguel Cervantes, *Pedro de Urdemalas,* in *Ocho Comedias y Ocho Entremeses Nuevos* (Madrid: Viuda de Alonso Martín, 1615), fol. 195v–208v.

6. "La gran comedia," line 1036.

7. "Si se guía más por el parecer ajeno que por el propio," Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha,* IV centenary edition (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 2004), part 2, chap. 18. Literally, "more by the view outside than the one within."

8. "*Liberalidad,*" part 2, chap. 18; "*Tema y tesón,*" part 2, chap. 18; on the don's self-sacrifice, see part 2, chap. 26.

9. Stephen Rupp, "The Governor's Wit: Castruccio, Sancho, Pedro I," *Comparative Literature Studies* 34 (1997): 376–91; A. J. Close, "Sancho Panza: Wise Fool," *Modern Language Review* 68 (1973): 344–57.

10. "De aquí adelante no os curéis de darme a comer cosas regaladas ni manjares esquisitos, porque será sacar a mi estómago de sus quicios, el cual está acostumbrado a cabra, a vaca, a tocino, a cecina, a nabos y a cebollas" (part 2, chap. 49).

11. *Don Quixote,* part 2, chap. 45; "Él ordenó cosas tan buenas que hasta hoy se guardan en aquel lugar, y se nombran Las constituciones del gran gobernador Sancho Panza" (part 2, chap. 51).

12. "Haz gala, Sancho, de la humildad de tu linaje, y no te desprecies de decir que vienes de labradores" (part 2, chap. 42).

13. For summary, see Jose Maria Paz Gago, *Semidtica del Quijote: teoria y practica de la ficcion narrative* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995).

14. "Que bien sé lo que son tentaciones del demonio, y que una de las mayores es ponerle a un hombre en el entendimiento que puede componer y imprimir un libro

con que gane tanta fama como dineros y tantos dineros cuanta fama" (part 2, Author's Preface).

15. "Que la abundancia de las cosas, aunque sean buenas, hace que no se estimen, y la carestía, aun de las malas, se estima en algo. Olvidábaseme de decirte que esperes el *Persiles,* que ya estoy acabando, y la segunda parte de *Galatea*" (part 2, Author's Preface).

16. Jose Manuel Martin Moran, *El Quijote en ciernes: Los descuidos de Cervantes y las fases de elaboracion textual* (Torino: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1990), chronicles the increasing frequency of the author's interruptions. These particular ones are taken from chapters 70, 53, and 44, respectively.

17. "Viendo lo cual el cura, pidió al escribano le diese por testimonio como Alonso Quijano el Bueno, llamado comúnmente D. Quijote de la Mancha, habia pasado desta presente vida y muerto naturalmente; y que el tal testimonio pedía para quitar la ocasión de que algún otro autor que Cide Hamete Benengeli le resucitase falsamente, y hiciese inacabables historias de sus hazañas" (part 2, chap. 74).

18. E.g., "Like flies to honey, thoughts swarmed to his brain, stinging it [como moscas a la miel, le acudían y picaban pensamientos]" (part 2, chap. 67).

19. George Haley, "The Narrator in *Don Quijote*: Maese Pedro's Puppet Show," *Modern Language Notes* 80 (1965): 145–65.

20. E.g., "Don Diego de Miranda was not yet aware of part 1 of this true history; had he read it, he would not have been filled with wonder by the don's behavior [No había aún llegado a su noticia la primera parte de su historia; que si la hubiera leído, cesara la admiración en que lo ponían sus hechos y sus palabras]" (part 2, chap. 17).

21. This tradition originated in Aristotle's *Poetics*. For the influence of Aristotle in Cervantes's time, see Jorge Fernández López, "Rhetorical Theory in Sixteenth-Century Spain: A Critical Survey," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 20 (2002): 133–48, and A. García Berrio, *Formación de la Teoría Literaria Moderna,* 2 vols. (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1980), 2:15–102.

22. E.g., when the Knight of White Moon remarks in chapter 65, "I'm from the same city as Don Quixote, whose madness and foolishness inspires pity in everyone who meets him [soy del mesmo lugar de don Quijote de la Mancha, cuya locura y sandez mueve a que le tengamos lástima todos cuantos le conocemos]."

23. De Vega slightly adapted this traditional view, claiming that the best theater combined the comic with the tragic. Which is, at its deepest level, what the author's humourous tragedy achieves. "Arte Nuevo Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo," lines 174–80.

24. Despite this widely acknowledged influence, Robert Hume has recently observed that "Cervantes usually gets only tepid and pro forma acknowledgement" in studies of Fielding. Robert D. Hume, "Fielding at 300: Elusive, Confusing, Misappropriated, or (Perhaps) Obvious?" *Modern Philology* 108 (2010): 224–62, 241. Moreover, the one work that Hume cites approvingly (Anthony Mortimer, " 'The Manner of Cervantes': Some Notes on *Joseph Andrews* and *Don Quixote,*" *Colloquium Helveticum*

16 [1992]: 69–83) focuses on Fielding's early debt to Cervantes's satire, not his later debt to Cervantes's comic narrator.

25. Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews,* 2 vols. (London, 1742). Hereafter cited in the text by book and chapter.

26. Book 1, chap. 1. Similarly, when Mrs. Slipslop rudely ignores a former acquaintance, he sallies forth "to vindicate the great character of Mrs. Slipslop from what low people, who have never seen high people, might think an absurdity" (book 2, chap. 13).

27. By "narrator," I mean the fictional author, and the term is used this way throughout the chapter. For a discussion of this term as it relates to *Don Quixote,* see Paz Gago, *Semidtica del Quijote.*

28. Mary Poovey, in a footnote to her history of the "modern fact," notes that Henry Fielding devised a "political arithmetic scheme devoted to the poor" in his *Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor,* but she does not connect this to Fielding's fictional works. Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 358, note 25. Several other scholars have cited Fielding's political treatises in a similar vein, but they have not observed the influence of Petty's quixotic narrator on Fielding's *The True Patriot*.

29. Henry Fielding, *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon,* in *The Works of Henry Fielding,* ed. Leslie Stephen, 10 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1882), 7:70. *Journal of a Voyage* was published posthumously in 1755.

30. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Sir William Petty* (London: John Murray, 1895), 93.

31. Adam Fox, "Sir William Petty, Ireland, and the Making of a Political Economist, 1653–87," *Economic History Review,* n.s., 62 (2009): 388–404.

32. Terence Wilmot Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662–1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

33. Peter Buck, "Seventeenth-Century Political Arithmetic: Civil Strife and Vital Statistics," *Isis* 67 (1977): 67–84.

34. Ted McCormick, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Erich Strauss, *Sir William Petty: Portrait of a Genius* (London: Bodley Head, 1954).

35. William Petty, *Political Arithmetic* (London, 1691), 25, reprinted in *The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty,* ed. C. H. Hull, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899). Citations in text by page number from original.

36. For the general persistence of Petty's view in Fielding's time, see Julian Hoppit, "Political Arithmetic in Eighteenth-Century England," *Economic History Review,* n.s. 49 (1996): 516–40.

37. Henry Fielding, *A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor* (London: A. Millar, 1753), 66–67. The printer misspells William Petty's name as "William Petyt," adding a dash of Continental flair. The full quote in the original runs,

"Sir William Petyt, in that excellent work called his Political Arithmetic." Petty's name is dutifully misspelled throughout the treatise.

38. *The True Patriot 1,* reprinted in *The History of Tom Jones,* 3 vols. (London: John Bell, 1775), 3:287. That *The True Patriot* was republished at the back of *Tom Jones,* long after the Jacobite rebellion had ceased to be a political threat, suggests that contemporary readers perceived the stylistic similarities between the two.

39. Petty, *Political Arithmetic,* preface.

40. John Hatcher, "Labour, Leisure and Economic Thought before the Nineteenth Century," *Past & Present* 160 (1998): 64–115; Richard Connors, " 'The Grand Inquest of the Nation': Parliamentary Committees and Social Policy in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England," *Parliamentary History* 14 (1995): 285–31.

41. Nicholas Rogers, "Aristocratic Clientage, Trade and Independency: Popular Politics in Pre-Radical Westminster," *Past & Present* 61 (1973): 70–106.

42. M. C. and R. R. Battestin, "Fielding, Bedford, and the Westminster Election of 1749," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 11 (1977–78): 143–85, 165.

43. Henry Fielding, *A True State of the Case of Bosavern Penlez* (London: A. Millar, 1749), 48.

44. For more on this feature of Fielding's thought, see how MacPherson redeems Fielding from the charge of being a simplistic moral allegorist, suggesting that there is something "profoundly liberal" and even progressive about his views on human equality (125). Sandra MacPherson, *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 125.

45. Although Fielding's novels (and often the man himself) were seen for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as grossly indecorous, the notion that "Fielding was fundamentally a moralist" took root in the 1950s with George Sherburn's "Fielding's Social Outlook," *Philology Quarterly* 35 (1956): 1–23, and Martin C. Battestin's *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1959). Quote is from Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," 1. At around this same period, China's communist government began claiming *Tom Jones* as a scientific analysis of the failures of capitalism. See Jiaming Han, "Henry Fielding in China," *Studies in Bibliography* 57 (2005/2006): 233–41.

46. Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings,* ed. Malvin Zirker (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 74.

47. Middleton's *Free Inquiry* was published in 1748, three years before Fielding cited him in *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers.*

48. Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History," *Church History* 55 (1986): 39–49, 43.

49. Just how effective is explored in Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 136–44.

50. To place this emphasis on the comic qualities of Fielding's style is to depart from the scholarly view that Fielding is a satirist in the tradition of Pope and Swift. For the classic example, see Claude Rawson, *Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal under Stress* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), chap. 2. Even as I emphasize

the pluralist features of Fielding's style, however, there is no doubt that (like Cervantes and many other comic writers back to Aristophanes), he was also frequently satiric.

51. Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones, A Foundling* (London, 1749), book 4, chap. 3. Hereafter cited in the text by book and chapter.

52. For summary, see Robert D. Hume, "Fielding at 300: Elusive, Confusing, Misappropriated, or (Perhaps) Obvious?" *Modern Philology* 108 (2010): 224–62. Rejecting this conclusion (and its diametric opposite, originating in R. S. Crane's influential article "The Plot of *Tom Jones,*" that *Tom Jones* is rigorously formal), Hume suggests that it is more helpful to see the novel as "experimental" (258–59).

53. Quintilian, *Institutes,* 6.2.13–17. The Latin term that Quintilian uses is "mores."

54. E.g., Quintilian, *Institutes,* 6.2.17. Quintilian explicitly uses the term "rusticos."

55. Machiavelli, *Discorsi,* 1.9; *The Prince,* chap. 6. This English translation is from the standard version available in Fielding's time, *The Works of the famous Nicholas Machiavel, Third Edition* (London, 1720), 280, 205.

56. That Fielding's narrator has read Machiavelli can be surmised from his remark: "One of the maxims which the devil, in a late visit upon earth, left to his disciples, is, when once you are got up, to kick the stool from under you. In plain English, when you have made your fortune by the good offices of a friend, you are advised to discard him as soon as you can" (1.13). Given that this reference to *The Prince* reflects Machiavelli's most antisocial and autocratic piece of counsel, it is not surprising that the narrator (like many contemporary readers of Machiavelli who were attracted to the more republican and democratic aspects of the Florentine's thought) rejects it. Yet there is perhaps also the faintest of dramatic ironies in the fact that the narrator, who has begun his history in book 1, chapter 1, by standing on the stool that Machiavelli fashions for the founders of new states, now kicks that stool away.

57. Typically, when scholars have attempted to summarize the narrator's ethics, they have tried to reduce him to either a sturdy Anglican sage or to an anarchic ironist. For a trenchant summary of such attempts, see Hume, "Fielding at 300," esp. 255–56.

58. Here, Fielding's narrator aligns himself with Petty's authorial persona, who observes, "I would in all doubtful Cases think the best, and consequently not despair." Preface.

59. "Fielding being mentioned, Johnson exclaimed, 'he was a blockhead;' and upon my expressing my astonishment at so strange an assertion, he said, 'What I mean by his being a blockhead is, that he was a barren rascal.' " James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson,* ed. David Momersley (New York: Penguin, 2008), 352.

60. Anonymous, "On the Incomparable History of Tom Jones," *Ladies Magazine* 2 (May 4, 1751), 202.

61. Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life and Writings (1793),* ed. Georges Bonnard (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1966), 4–5.

62. David Wootton, "Narrative, Irony, and Faith in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall,*" *History and Theory* 33 (1994): 77–105.

63. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume the Fourth* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1788), vii.

64. Leo Braudy, *Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding, and Gibbon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

65. Gibbon: "We shall now endeavour with clearness and precision to describe"; "It is of them that we are now speaking" (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume the First* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1776), 19, 78). Fielding: "We now return to take leave" (book 18, chap.13). The 1776 edition is cited because it was the first to arrive in the American Republic.

66. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall (1776),* 222; Fielding, *Tom Jones,* book 17, chap. 1.

67. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall (1776),* 511; Fielding, *Tom Jones,* book 16, chap. 2.

68. Fielding, book 10, chap. 2; Gibbon, lii.

69. "It is not the purpose of this work to enter into any minute description of the Roman exercises. We shall only remark . . ." (Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall*, 11). *Tom Jones* is notoriously digressive despite its insistences on its larger narrative "purpose" (e.g., "these incidents contribute only to confirm the great, useful, and uncommon doctrine, which it is the purpose of this whole work to inculcate, and which we must not fill up our pages by frequently repeating" (12.8)).

70. J. G. A. Pocock, "Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and the World View of the Late Enlightenment," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10 (1977): 287–303.

71. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall (1776),* 32.

72. Later editions of *The Decline and Fall* explicitly uses the term "heterodox" to refer to religious differences. E.g., *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* 6 vols. (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1788), 1:328, 397.

73. On Gibbon's attitude toward Christianity, see B. W. Young, " 'Scepticism in Excess': Gibbon and Eighteenth-Century Christianity," *Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 179–99.

74. Arthur H. Shaffer, *The Politics of History: Writing the History of the American Revolution, 1783–1815* (Chicago: Precedent, 1975), 9.

75. There was, e.g., Samuel Williams's *Natural and Civil History of Vermont* (1794), John Daly Burk's *History of Virginia* (1804), and Isaac Backus's *History of New England with Special Reference to the Denomination called Baptists* (1777–96).

76. Gibbon expressed his firm commitment to monarchy and rejection of democracy, although his work was often used for populist purposes. E.g., David Womersley, "Gibbon's Unfinished History: The French Revolution and English Political Vocabularies," *Historical Journal* 35 (1992): 63–89, 87.

77. George W. Pilcher, "William Gordon and the *History of the American Revolution,*" *Historian* 34 (1972): 447–65, 452.

78. Orin Grant Libby, "A Critical Examination of Gordon's *History of the American Revolution,*" *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1899* 1 (1900): 367–88.

79. For "probably," see William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of The United States of America,* 3 vols. (New York: Samuel Campbell, 1801), 1:25, 27, 32, 34, 39, etc. For a present-tense pivot, see, e.g., Gordon, *History,* 1:19: "We now behold." For a gentled imperative, see, e.g., Gordon,

History, 1:26: "Let us return." For the first-person plural deontic modal, see, e.g., Gordon, *History,* 1:27: "We must include."

80. E.g., Gordon, *History,* 1:16.

81. Gordon, *History,* 1.20; Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall (1776),* 470. Fielding, *Tom Jones,* 7.11.

82. Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, July 18, 1789, reprinted in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1875–1876* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1876), 95–96, 96.

83. Printed in James Trecothick Austin, *The Life of Elbridge Gerry: With Contemporary Letters* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1828), 520.

84. Gordon, *History,* preface, A4.

85. Elmer Douglass Johnson, "David Ramsay: Historian or Plagiarist?" *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 57 (1956): 189–98.

86. On how Ramsay's formal choices in *The History* reflect contemporary concerns, see Peter C. Messer, "From a Revolutionary History to a History of Revolution: David Ramsay and the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (2002): 205–33.

87. E.g., "As he had too much temper to be provoked or surprised, into a dereliction of his advantages, so he had too much penetration to lose them by circumvention or sleight" becomes: "He had too much penetration to lose it from the circumvention of military manoeuvres, and too much temper to be provoked to a dereliction of it." David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution,* 2 vols. (London, 1790), 2:5–6. This passage does not exist in Gordon, so the distillation is Ramsay's.

88. As another example of this strategy, Ramsay's historian distills the dramatized military debates of the *Register* (which in the manner of Thucydides, leapt omnisciently through the minds of various commanders) into blunt admissions of his own ignorance: "the real designs of general Howe were involved in great obscurity" (2:6). Ramsay's narrative was so successful at cultivating a tone of unvarnished simplicity that modern historians celebrated its probity after they had excoriated Gordon for his intellectual thefts. Libby, "Critical Examination," 379.

89. Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 204–33.

90. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall* (1776), 357, 449.

91. Ramsay, *History,* 2:254, 273.

92. William Raymond Smith, *History as Argument: Three Patriot Historians of the American Revolution* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1966).

93. Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution,* 3 vols. (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805), 3:410.

94. Warren, *History,* 3:410; 1:176.

95. Warren, *History,* 3:412; 3:411; 3:425.

96. [Mercy Otis Warren], *Observations on the New Constitution By a Columbian Patriot* (Boston, 1788), 1.

97. The farces were *The Blockheads* (1776) and *The Motley Assembly* (1779).

98. Kate Davies, *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

99. Ramsay, *History,* 2:269. Ramsay, in typical style, plagiarized this heavily from Gordon, whose version runs: "Two redoubts, which were advanced about 200 yards on the left of the British, greatly impeded the progress of the combined armies. An attack on these was therefore proposed . . . The men marched to the assault with unloaded arms, at dark on the night of the 14th, passed the abbatis and palisades, and attacking on all sides carried the redoubt in a few minutes, with the loss of 8 killed and 28 wounded." Gordon, *History,* 4:192. Gordon, meanwhile, plagiarized much of his account from *The Annual Register of 1781,* which runs: "Two redoubts, which were advanced about 300 yards on the British left, had greatly incommoded the enemy, and still continued to impede their progress. It was determined to attack these . . . [the men] marched to the assault with unloaded arms; passed the abbatis and palisades without waiting to remove them; and attacking the works on all sides at once, carried the redoubt with the utmost rapidity" (131).

100. "Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Mercy Otis Warren, 8 February 1805," in *Warren-Adams Letters, Volume 2 (1778–1814),* ed. Henry Cabot Lodge, Winslow Warren, and Worthington Chauncey Ford (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1925), 345. The only cabinet member to decline was Henry Dearborn, the secretary of war, who perhaps not surprisingly, had no interest in Warren's unbellicose account.

Chapter 6 · Amending Ourselves

1. Frederick Douglass, *Selected Speeches and Writings,* ed. Philip Sheldon and Yuval Taylor (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1999), 347–48.

2. W. Caleb McDaniel, "Repealing Unions: American Abolitionists, Irish Repeal, and the Origins of Garrisonian Disunionism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (2008): 243–69, 244; William E. Cain, ed., *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery: Selections from "The Liberator"* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

3. Joseph William Hewitt, "Homeric Laughter," *Classical Journal* 23 (1928): 436–47.

4. Stephen Halliwell, "The Uses of Laughter in Greek Culture," *Classical Quarterly,* n.s., 41 (1991): 279–96; *Greek Laughter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

5. N. Postlethwaite, "Thersites in the *Iliad,*" *Greece & Rome,* 2nd ser., 35 (1988): 123–36, 133.

6. Yoav Rinon, "Tragic Hephaestus: The Humanized God in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,*" *Phoenix* 60 (2006): 1–20, 3.

7. For the satyr-play background, see Edith Hall, "Ithyphallic Males Behaving Badly; or Satyr Drama as Gendered Tragic Ending," in *Parchments of Gender: Deciphering the Body in Antiquity,* ed. Maria Wyke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 13–37; Pierre Voelke, *Un Theatre de la Marge: Aspects figuratifs et configurationnels du drame satyrique dans l'Athenes classique* (Bari: Levanti editori, 2001); Ralf

Krumeich, Nikolaus Pechstein, and Bernd Seidensticker, eds., *Das griechische Satyrspiel* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999).

8. P. E. Easterling, "A Show for Dionysus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 36–53.

9. Ethel Margaret Thornbury, "Fielding's Theory of Comedy," in *Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1931), chap. 9.

10. Cynthia A. Kierner, ed., *The Contrast: Manners, Morals, and Authority in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

11. Mark Evans Bryan, " 'Slideing into Monarchical Extravagance': *Cato* at Valley Forge and the Testimony of William Bradford Jr.," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (2010): 123–44.

12. Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

13. Kierner, *The Contrast,* 54.

14. Kierner, *The Contrast,* 94–95.

15. Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

16. Granville Ganter, "The Active Virtue of *The Columbian Orator,*" *New England Quarterly* 70 (1997): 463–76.

17. Caleb Bingham, *The Columbian Orator: Containing a Variety of Original and Selected Pieces* (Boston: Caleb Bingham, 1797), 10.

18. Dana Harrington, "Remembering the Body: Eighteenth-Century Elocution and the Oral Tradition," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 28 (2010): 67–95.

19. Carolyn Eastman, "The Indian Censures the White Man: 'Indian Eloquence' and American Reading Audiences in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser. 65 (2008): 535–64.

20. Bingham, *Orator,* 60.

21. Section 1, Article 22: "of the Peers of *Scotland,* at the Time of the Union, sixteen shall be the Number to sit and vote in the House of Lords, and forty-five the Number of the Representatives of *Scotland* in the House of Commons of the Parliament of *Great Britain.*"

22. Section 5.

23. David W. Blight, introduction to *The Columbian Orator. By Caleb Bingham. 1797,* ed. David W. Blight (New York: New York University Press, 1998), xiii–xxix, xvii.

24. One of Irving's close friends reminisced about their youth: "I remember well the elementary books scattered about the seminary, so characteristic of a common English school at that period: the *Columbian Orator* of Bingham." Evert A. Duyckinck, ed., *Irvingiana: A Memorial of Washington Irving* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1860), xxxii.

25. [Washington Irving], *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.,* 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1822), 1:3–4.

26. "It is a pious custom, in some Catholic countries, to honor the memory of saints by votive lights burnt before their pictures . . . in like manner has it fared with the immortal Shakespeare" (Irving, *Geoffrey Crayon,* 1:227).

27. Irving, *Geoffrey Crayon,* 1:229, 232, 241, 237, 239, 247, 244.

28. Irving, *Geoffrey Crayon,* 1:76, 78. On "future shock" in Irving, see John Seelye, "Root and Branch: Washington Irving and American Humor," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38 (1984): 415–25.

29. Irving, *Geoffrey Crayon,* 1:89.

30. Irving, *Geoffrey Crayon,* 2:187.

31. *The Writings of John Marshall, late Chief Justice of the United States, upon the Constitution* (New York: William H. Morrison, 1890), 243; for helpful discussions of Marshall's originalism, see G. Edward White, "The Marshall Court and Cultural Change, 1815–1835," in *The Oliver Wendell Holmes Devise History of the Supreme Court of the United States,* ed. Paul Freund (New York, Macmillan, 1988); Richard A. Brisbin Jr., "John Marshall and the Nature of Law in the Early Republic," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (1990): 57–80.

32. John Marshall, *The Life of George Washington,* 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1832), 2:166.

33. Lester J. Cappon, "Jared Sparks: The Preparation of an Editor," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society,* 3rd ser., 90 (1978): 3–21.

34. Jared Sparks, *A Reply to the Strictures of Lord Mahan and Others, on the Mode of Editing the Writings of Washington* (Cambridge: John Bartlett, 1852), 17. The *North American Review* takes mild exception to this principle in its review, "*The Washington Papers,* ed. Jared Sparks" (39 [1834]: 467–94).

35. Jared Sparks, *The Life of George Washington* (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1839), 530.

36. Sparks, *Life of George Washington,* 403.

37. Dorothy Ross, "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 909–28. "The cyclical view of history in classical republicanism began to give way to the possibility of perpetual life" (912).

38. Irving's biography of Washington has not drawn enormous critical interest. Attempting to address the "virtual famine of close comment" for the bicentennial, Andrew Myers was himself able to offer only this endorsement: "I found a fair proportion of it still interesting, both as history and as literature—if you skip a word or two, and blink past places where the stitching shows." Andrew Myers, "The New York Years in Irving's *The Life of George Washington,*" *Early American Literature* 11 (1976): 68–83, 81.

39. Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington,* 5 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1856–57), 4:509.

40. Irving, *George Washington,* 4:530. Irving is directly revising Sparks's account: "The convention was in session four months, and the diligence of the members is proved by the fact that they sat from five to seven hours a day. The result was the Constitution of the United States which was proposed to be substituted for the Articles of Confederation" (Sparks, *Life of George Washington,* 402). There is also an in-

teresting echo of another biography, Samuel George Arnold's *The Life of George Washington: First President of the United States* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), which runs, "The result was the formation of the constitution of the United States; an instrument which will long be a monument of the wisdom and patriotism of that august body" (188). As these quotes show, neither Sparks nor Arnold anticipated Irving's comic presentation, which is signaled in the second half of his sentence with the introduction of the parenthesis.

41. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1855), 156–57.

42. Frederick Douglass, "Comments on Gerrit Smith's Address," *North Star,* Mar. 30, 1849. Reprinted in *Selected Speeches and Writings,* 137.

43. William S. McFeeley, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Norton, 1991), 205: Douglass's "arguments were those of Lysander Spooner and William Goodell as he had acknowledged at the time of his change of heart about the Constitution in 1851."

44. Granville Ganter, " 'He Made Us Laugh Some': Frederick Douglass's Humor," *African American Review* 37 (2003): 535–52, 535.

45. George L. Ruffin, introduction to Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (San Francisco: Phillips and Hunt, 1882), 21.

46. James Monroe Gregory, *Frederick Douglass the Orator* (Springfield: Willey & Co., 1893), 90.

47. For Douglass's increasingly martial rhetoric, see Robert S. Levine, "Frederick Douglass, War, Haiti," *PMLA* 124 (2009): 1864–68. For Douglass's indolent view of property, see the end of chapter 3. For Douglass's view of himself as an eccentric narrator, see, e.g., his remark: "My American friends looked at me with astonishment. 'A wood-sawyer' offering himself to the public as an editor! A slave, brought up in the depths of ignorance, assuming to instruct the highly civilized people of the north in the principles of liberty, justice, and humanity! The thing looked absurd." Douglass, *Life and Times,* chap. 7. For Douglass's uses of *imitatio* and inclusive laughter, both of which he adopted from Bingham's *Orator,* see the earlier portions of this chapter.

48. John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Twelve, 2008); James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican* (New York: Norton, 2008); Paul Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick, *Douglass and Lincoln: How a Revolutionary Black Leader and a Reluctant Liberator Struggled to End Slavery and Save the Union* (New York: Walker and Company, 2007).

49. Douglass, *Life and Times,* 422.

50. J. B. McClure, *Anecdotes of Abraham Lincoln and Lincoln's Stories* (Chicago: Rhodes and McClure, 1879). Some of these anecdotes are no doubt apocryphal, but they are consistent with Lincoln's general public performance. For discussion, see Benjamin P. Thomas, *"Lincoln's Humor" and Other Essays* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

51. Douglass, *Life and Times,* 435.

52. Paul Selby, ed., *Stories and Speeches of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Thompson and Thomas, 1900), 231–2.

53. Lincoln was notoriously fond of minstrel humor, and the old frontier saying

"root hog or die" had been popularized in the 1850s by blackface performers such as George W. H. Griffin, also known for "Hush my little coon" and a burlesque version of *Othello.* On Lincoln, see Eric Foner, *Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 2011), 120.

Chapter 7 · Demokratia *at Denshawai*

1. On the debt of the liberal-electoral model to English imperialism, see Niall Ferguson, e.g., *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (New York: Penguin, 2003). It has frequently been claimed that modern liberal-democracy has taken root more quickly in former English colonies. For a summary, see Michael Bernhard, Christopher Reenock, and Timothy Nordstrom, "The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival," *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (2004): 225–50.

2. E.g., Lawrence Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2009), 11.

3. Jacob M. Landau, "Popular Arabic Plays, 1909," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 17 (1986): 120–25.

4. Marvin Carlson, "Negotiating Theatrical Modernism in the Arab World," *Theatre Journal* 65 (2013): 523–35, 526–27.

5. For a discussion of Plautus's possible influence on Arabic literature as far back as *1001 Arabian Nights,* see Renato Rafaelli, "Un racconto arabo, l'*Elena* di Euripide e la struttura del *Miles* di Plauto," in *Lecturae Plautinae Sarsinares XII. Miles Gloriosus,* ed. Renato Raffaelli and Alba Tontini (Urbino: Edizioni QuattroVenti, 2009), 135–56. On how the texts and concepts of ancient comedy found their way into the Arab world, via medieval Spain, see Edwin J. Webber, "Comedy as Satire in Hispano-Arabic Spain," *Hispanic Review* 26 (1958): 1–11. The nineteenth-century al-Nahda had promoted the translation and performance of European theater, leading in Cairo to long runs of Restoration-influenced comedies, complete with female actors. Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction,* 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 43–44. For a treatment of the Cairo playwrights preceding il-Fār, see Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of Its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 327.

6. This play, along with a collection of il-Fār's other comedies, is published in Manfred Woidich and Jacob M. Landau, *Arabisches Volkstheater in Kairo im Jahre 1909* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993). My commentary and English translation is heavily indebted to Woidich and Landau's commentary and German translation. I would also like to thank Maria Potter for fact-checking my translation and discussion of *Ibn il-Balad.*

7. Zaid Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 69.

8. Aḥmad Fahīm il-Fār, *Riwāyat Ibn il-Balad,* in *Arabisches Volkstheater,* 91–135, 128. See Woidich and Landau's commentary for how the urinary joke is implied. From here, page numbers of the Arabic original will be cited directly in the text.

9. خليه عيان احسن من البطاله (108).

10. Sawsan Messiri, *Ibn Al-Balad: A Concept of Egyptian Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 9.

11. Messiri, *Ibn Al-Balad,* 78–9, 85.

12. Messiri, *Ibn Al-Balad,* 41–2.

13. Messiri, *Ibn Al-Balad,* 53.

14. Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians,* 69.

15. On Luṭfi's "utilitarian ethical and political philosophy," which led him to claim that (to quote Luṭfī directly), "human society stands on mutual usefulness," see Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804–1952* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 92–97, 93, 96. Also see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 171–83, especially p. 174 for the influence of "the classical arguments of Mill," and p. 182 for Luṭfi's belief that "feminism was an essential part of true nationalism."

16. Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 179.

17. Malak Badrawi, *Political Violence in Egypt, 1910–1925: Secret Societies, Plots, and Assassinations* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

18. Henry Campbell-Bannerman, "Speech at Bolton, 15 October 1903," reprinted in the *Times,* October 16, 1903.

19. For a sympathetic account of Gorst and his actions, see Peter Mellini, *Sir Eldon Gorst: The Overshadowed Proconsul* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977). For the more usual scholarly consensus on Gorst, see Badrawi, *Political Violence.*

20. "Sedition in Egypt: Revival of Press Law Putting Curb on Egyptian 'Feeling.'" *New York Times,* May 23, 1909.

21. Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 31.

22. Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32–82, 71.

23. Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

24. Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 20. For a helpful discussion of some of the limits of Mehta's approach, see Andrew Sartori, "The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission," *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 623–42.

25. For an excellent summary, see R. C. Mowat, "From Liberalism to Imperialism: The Case of Egypt, 1875–1887," *Historical Journal* 16 (1973): 109–24.

26. Duncan S. A. Bell, "Empire and International Relations in Victorian Political Thought," *Historical Journal* 49 (2006): 281–98, 287.

27. For French liberalism, see Pitts, *Turn to Empire.* For the eighteenth century, see Jack. P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For the twentieth century, see Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

28. Christopher Gelpi, "Performing on Cue? The Formation of Public Opinion Toward War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54 (2010): 88–116.

29. Leonie Huddy and Stanley Feldman, "Americans Respond Politically to 9/11: Understanding the Impact of the Terrorist Attacks and Their Aftermath," *American Psychologist* 66 (2011): 455–67.

30. Christopher Gelpi and Joseph Grieco, "Democracy, Trade and the Nature of the Liberal Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2008): 17–36.

31. E.g., Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them* (New York: Penguin, 2014); Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994). Even empathy, which is apparently focused on the well-being of others, is frequently self-absorbed, encouraging us to falsely conclude that we can understand the perspective of others and to congratulate ourselves for our moral goodness.

32. Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review* 108 (2001): 814–34.

33. Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

34. On Athens, see Kurt A. Raaflaub, "Democracy, Power, and Imperialism in Fifth-Century Athens," in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy,* ed. J. Peter Euben, John R. Wallace, and Josiah Ober (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 103–46.

35. On the early performance history and subsequent critical neglect of this play, which Shaw reckoned as part of a trilogy (along with *Major Barbara* and *Man and Superman*) "of exceptional weight and magnitude" that established him as "a serious dramatist," see Frederick P. W. McDowell, "Politics, Comedy, Character, and Dialectic: The Shavian World of *John Bull's Other Island,*" *PMLA* 82 (1967): 542–53. These words are Shaw's own, cited by McDowell (542). For overviews of the play's satiric take on English imperialism, see Kathleen Ochshorn, "Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and the Shadow of a New Empire: *John Bull's Other Island,*" *Shaw* 26 (2006): 180–93, and Peter Gahan, "Colonial Locations of Contested Space and *John Bull's Other Island,*" *Shaw* 26 (2006): 194–221.

36. George Bernard Shaw, *John Bull's Other Island and Major Barbara* (New York: Brentano's, 1911), 25–26.

37. Nicholas Grene, "*John Bull's Other Island*: At Home and Abroad," *Shaw Review* 23 (1980): 11–16.

38. Shaw's mention in the preface of "the truth formulated by William Morris" is a gesture toward his own longstanding effort to overthrow Social Darwinism's insistence on the "survival of the fittest" with a Lamarckian socialism in which people voluntarily evolved to become more generous, cooperative, and egalitarian. The result was a political utopianism that remained rooted in a worldly logic of success, for even though Lamarck rejected Darwinian natural selection, his version of evolution was still driven by the same biological demands. The Lamarckian giraffe, after all, stretched its neck not to achieve a perfect geometric symmetry or to be closer to God.

It did so to acquire more food, live longer, and breed better. For further discussion, see Piers J. Hale, "Of Mice and Men: Evolution and the Socialist Utopia. William Morris, H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw," *Journal of the History of Biology* 43 (2010): 17–66, 49–60.

39. E.g., Shan Luo, George Ainslie, Lisa Giragosian, and John Monterosso, "Behavioral and Neural Evidence of Incentive Bias for Immediate Rewards Relative to Preference-Matched Delayed Rewards," *Journal of Neuroscience* 29 (2009): 14820–27; George Ainslie, "Précis of a Breakdown of Will," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 28 (2005): 635–50; George Ainslie and John Monterosso, "Hyperbolic Discounting as a Factor in Addiction: A Critical Analysis," in *Choice, Behavioral Economics, and Addiction,* ed. Nick Heather and Rudy E. Vuchnich (Elsevier, 2003), 35–70. This general psychological tendency does not mean that all humans experience it in the same way or to the same degree. E.g., Kris N. Kirby and Julia C. Finch, "The Hierarchical Structure of Self-Reported Impulsivity," *Personality and Individual Differences* 48 (2010): 704–13.

40. J. Doyne Farmer and John Geanakoplos, "Hyperbolic Discounting is Rational: Valuing the Far Future with Uncertain Discount Rates," Cowles Foundation Discussion Paper No. 1719 (New Haven, Yale University, 2009).

41. See chapter 2.

42. For a discussion of how this phenomenon also leads to the failure of democracies to redistribute wealth internally, see Adam Bonica, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, "Why Hasn't Democracy Slowed Rising Inequality?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27 (2013): 103–24.

43. David Amodio, "The Neuroscience of Prejudice and Stereotyping," *Nature Reviews* 15 (2014): 670–82, 679. Amodio notes that "interventions that enhance the cognitive control of behavior" are the most "effective" known therapy for reducing public bias.

44. For a superb discussion of this diversity of appetite, particularly as it pertains to literature, see Suzanne Keen, "Readers' Temperaments and Fictional Character," *New Literary History* 42 (2011): 295–314; and "Narrative and the Emotion," *Poetics Today* 32 (2011): 1–53.

45. On visualization, see, e.g., Hal E. Hershfield, Daniel G. Goldstein, William F. Sharpe, Jesse Fox, Leo Yeykelis, Laura L. Carstensen, Jeremy N. Bailenson, "Increasing Saving Behavior Through Age-Progressed Renderings of the Future Self," *Journal of Marketing Research* 48 (2011): S23–S37. On the role that emotion can play, see, e.g., Elke U. Weber and Eric J. Johnson, "Mindful Judgment and Decision Making," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009): 53–85.

46. This interpretation goes back to the early twentieth century, when a critic for the *Irish Times* remarked, "It is not a little difficult to make up one's mind whether the play is a comedy or a tragedy" (December 27, 1922).

Conclusion · The Futures of Comic Democracy

1. For a brief history of this standard defense, and an influential example of the equally standard rebuttal that democracy (whatever its virtues) is impractical (be-

cause its idealism is at odds with the bodily egoism of the general public), see Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942).

2. As noted in the introduction, by "democracy" I do not intend the will of the majority (which, like the ancients, the preceding chapters have treated as an invitation to mob rule, demagoguery, and even tyranny) but the active inclusion of minority perspectives in civic problem solving.

3. E.g., Joseph T. Siegle, Michael M. Weinstein, and Morton H. Halperin, *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). See chapter 1 for more discussion.

4. For a recent example of such pin-sticking, see Gordon H. Orians, *Snakes, Sunrises, and Shakespeare: How Evolution Shapes our Loves and Fears* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

5. "The Science of Free-Indirect Discourse: An Alternate Cognitive Effect," coauthored with John Monterosso, *Narrative* 24 (2016): 82–103.

6. George Ainslie has remarked: "If we equate a person's welfare with her economic wealth, we will have to conclude that the consistency achieved by individuals through self-discipline, and by organizations through the application of systematic guidelines to members' choices, is an outcome that ought to be maximized. Conversely, impetuosity must be a maladaptive trait, and ought to be cured or trained out of those who suffer from it." Having set up this standard, "rational choice theory" view of impetuosity, Ainslie then proceeds to challenge it empirically. George Ainslie, "Uncertainty as Wealth," *Behavioural Processes* 64 (2003): 369–85, 369–70.

7. The rough scientific equivalent for *imitatio* is "social learning," which refers to the way that individuals learn by copying traits from a wide variety of cultural exemplars. For some recent discussions of its adaptive qualities, see Shakti Lamba, "Social Learning in Cooperative Dilemmas," *Proceedings of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences* 281 (2014): 1–9; Wataru Nakahashi, "The Effect of Cultural Interaction on Cumulative Cultural Evolution," *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 352 (2014): 6–15.

8. Ainslie remarks, "Research has confirmed the wisdom of ages that prosperity does not increase happiness" ("Uncertainty," 370). Also see Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Happiness,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 201–5; Tim Kasser, *The High Price of Materialism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003). Unfortunately, while our capacity for happiness is quite limited, our capacity for unhappiness seems almost bottomless.

9. Hélène Landemore, "Deliberation, Cognitive Diversity, and Democratic Inclusiveness: An Epistemic Argument for the Random Selection of Representatives," *Synthese* 190 (2013): 1209–31, 1210. See also Hélène Landemore and Jon Elster, eds., *Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012); Josiah Ober, "Democracy's Wisdom: An Aristotelian Middle Way for Collective Judgment," *American Political Science Review* 107 (2013): 104–22.

10. E.g., G. A. Bonanno, J. T. Moskowitz, A. Papa, and S. Folkman, "Resilience to Loss in Bereaved Spouses, Bereaved Parents, and Bereaved Gay Men," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88 (2005): 827–43.

11. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), 219.

abnegative theory of happiness, 75, 77–78, 82, 88, 157
Adams, John: on *Common Sense,* 50; *The Decline and Fall* and, 91; on Gordon, 111; on Paine, 49, 174n89; on property, 88–89
American Revolution, federal historians of, 109–16
ancient comedy: civic logic of, 35; classic male parts in, 57–58; critics of, 2–3; development of forms of, 12; disappearance of, 15, 29; dramatic techniques of, 11–12; ethos of creative independence and, 1; framing of emergence of, 12; happiness and, 11, 12, 13; in Middle Ages, 32; New Comedy and, 76–77; origins of, 8; pluralism and, 16; populism of, 3, 11–12, 15, 26–27; pragmatism of, 13; problem-solving approach in, 11; revival of, 32–33; role in growing democracy, 12–14; stereotypes in, 2; tradition of putting gods on stage in, 118–19. *See also specific works*
Andria (Terence), 40–41
Ariosto, Ludovico, *La Cassaria,* 41, 43
Aristophanes: *Birds,* 2, 11, 153; characters of, 77; *Clouds,* 2; death of, 29; Ionian War trilogy of, 20, 26–28, 29; Old Comedy and, 15; *Thesmophoriazusae,* 20, 22–23. *See also Frogs; Lysistrata*
Aristotle, 25, 187n21
Arnold, Thomas, 158
Arte Nueva (de Vega), 92
Athenian *demokratia.* See *demokratia*
Athens: crises in, 20, 23; impiety as crime in, 119; material conditions in, 29; property ownership in, 78; state religion of, 25–26; theater in, 25–26
atomism and Epicurus, 75, 81
audacia, 38, 50
Aulularia (Plautus), 76
autocracy, 27–28

Bacon, Francis, 60
Baring, Evelyn, 141, 142, 143
Bartholomew Fayre (Jonson), 78–79
Beaux Stratagem, The (Farquhar), 83–85, 88
Beggar's Opera, The (Gay), 85–88
Bell, John, prompt book of, 69–70
Berlin, Isaiah, 5
Bingham, Caleb, *The Columbian Orator,* 29, 118, 120–22, 123, 129
Birds (Aristophanes), 2, 11, 153
Boccaccio, *The Decameron,* 32
bodies: appetites of, and imperialism, 143–45; bodily dialect of comedy, 28–29; bodily drive and democracy, ix–x; bodily effects of *The Prince,* 48; bodily impulses of comic democracy, 155–56; bodily logic of democracy, 25, 150; freedom as emerging organically from, 26–27, 28; happiness, Epicurus, and, 74–75
boldness, as empowering, 38–42
buyer's remorse in new democracies, 4

Canterbury Tales, The (Chaucer), 32
Captivi (Plautus), 39
Cervantes, Miguel, *Pedro de Urdemalas,* 92. See also *Don Quixote*
Charleton, Walter, *Epicurus' Morals,* 79
Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales,* 32
Churchill, Winston, 155
churchmen, cunning of, 42–43
Cicero, 57
citizenship, argument for extension of, 21, 22, 51–52
Clizia (Machiavelli), 35
colonialism. *See* imperialism
Columbian Orator, The (Bingham), 29, 118, 120–22, 123, 129
comedy: autocracy and, 28; bodily dialect of, 28–29; democratic function of, 26–30; *demokratia* and, 1, 15–16; historical function of, 24–25; imitation of, as early modern tradition of rhetoric, 54; for initiating democratic change, 117–18; introduction of, into historical narrative, 113–14; live performance of, 131; for promoting popular rule, 155–56; turn toward romance, 29–30. *See also* ancient comedy; Epicurean comedy

Comedy of Errors, The (Shakespeare), 63
comic democracy: futures of, 155–58. *See also* ancient comedy; comedy; comic practices; democracy; *demokratia*; narrative of, 133
comic practices: democratic utopianism and, 153; Douglass and, 133; effectiveness of, 146; overview of, 56–62; political function of, 143; practical benefits of, 157. *See also* eccentricity; *imitatio; impetuoso;* inclusive laughter; *indolentia*
comic self-revision, 13
Common Sense (Paine), 49–52, 89
Congreve, William, *The Way of the World,* 83
Constitution: Douglass on, 130; Irving on, 128–29; Pitt and, 122–23; slavery and, 117, 122, 126–27; views of, by Washington's biographers, 125–26
Contrast, The (Tyler), 119
Contre-Machiavel (Gentillet), 62
Cowley, Abraham, *Cutter of Coleman Street,* 79–80
crisis: *demokratia* and, 16, 20, 26–27; in *Henriad* trilogy, 54–55; in Ionian War trilogy, 20; in New Comedy of Menander, 77
cultural imperialism and liberal-electoral model of democracy promotion, 137
culture: autocratic, 27; democracy and, 2
Cutter of Coleman Street (Cowley), 79–80

daring: as bringing luck, 38–41; as foundation of public virtue, 50; as leading to populism, 47–48
Darwin, Charles, 86
Darwinism, 149–50, 153–54
Decameron, The (Boccaccio), 32
Declaration of Independence, 73, 88, 89–90
demagoguery, 2–3, 5, 53, 54, 106, 201n2. *See also* mob rule
democracy: bodily drive and, ix–x; bodily logic of, 25, 150; Churchill on, 155; comic, futures of, 155–58; comic practices and, 133; definition of, 201n2; *demokratia* compared to, 3; efforts to instill or promote, 1–2, 4–5; evolution of, 154; freedom and, 8; Henry as force for, 63–72; pluralism and, 3, 146; pragmatic approach to, 136, 138; progressive, 97; self-proclaimed, 4–5; as sensible, 155; Third Wave, 4; universalizing approach to, 3, 5; utopianism and, 143, 153; as in vogue, 1. See also *demokratia;* minorities; pluralism; populism
democracy promotion: electoral model of, 4; by England, 143; liberal-electoral model of, 4, 5–7, 137, 138; role for ancient comedy in, 7–14; shortcomings of, 143–45
demokratia: comedy and, 1, 15–16; crisis and, 16, 20, 26–27; Darwinism and, 153–54; empiricism of, 8–9; happiness and, 8–9; idealism and, 145–46; inclusiveness of, 13–14; inequalities of, 89; Plato on, 16–17, 19; pluralism of, 10, 12; power dynamics of, 18–19; as practices, not ideology, 15–16, 19–20; pragmatism of, 9–10, 19, 24; problem-solving practice of, 9, 10, 27, 89, 133, 137; promotion of, 10–11; revival of tools for growing, 136–37; success of, 9, 10–11; unconsidered nature of, 8. *See also* democracy
Demosthenes, 70, 71
Denshawai Incident, 137–38, 141–42, 143, 148–49
de Vega, Lope, 92, 93
Discorsi (Machiavelli), 35, 47
diversity: *demokratia* and, 16–17; Ionian War trilogy and, 27; lack of, in ancient comedy, 14; in *Lysistrata,* 21, 22. *See also* pluralism
Don Quixote (Cervantes): author in, 93–95, 96, 97; eccentricity in, 92–93, 95–96; influence of, 96; Petty and, 97, 98; Sancho in, 93; tone of, 91–92; Warren and, 113; wealth and fame in, 94
Don Quixote in England (Fielding), 96
Douglass, Frederick: on *The Columbian Orator,* 129; comic practices of, 14, 133; on *Dred Scott* decision, 117, 118, 132–33; humor of, 131–32; Lincoln and, 71, 133–34; *My Bondage and My Freedom,* 130–31; *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* 130; on property, 90
Dragonetti, Giacinto, 50
Dred Scott v. Sandford, 117
Dyskolos (Menander), 30–31, 32

eccentricity: as approach to governance, 106–7, 115–16; civic virtue of, 101; in *The Decline and Fall,* 107–8; in *Don Quixote,* 92–93, 95–96; Fielding and, 103; Gordon and, 113; Petty and, 97, 99; Ramsay and, 112; Warren and, 112
Ecclesiazusae (Aristophanes), 29
egalitarianism, reactive, of *demokratia,* 10
Egypt. *See* Denshawai Incident
electoral model of democracy promotion, 4. *See also* liberal-electoral model of democracy promotion

empiricism: comic democracy and, 156–57; of *demokratia,* 8–9; new democrats and, 7
Enfield Speaker, 68, 72
England: democracy promotion by, 143; imperialism of, 142–44, 149; Whigs in, 81–82
Enlightenment philosophy and liberal-electoral model, 5
Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, An (Fielding), 102–3
Epicurean comedy: of Congreve, 83; of Farquhar, 83–85; of Gay, 85–88; of Shadwell, 80–81, 82–83
Epicureans, politics of, 183n30
Epicurus: atomism and, 75, 81; democratic practice and, 77–78; on function of ethics, 88; happiness and, 73, 74–75, 79, 157; influence of, on Jefferson, 88–90; materialism of, 74–75, 81–82; natural philosophy and, 75–76; will of, 78
Epicurus' Morals (Charleton), 79
Erasmus, 56
ethos, 104–5
Eunuchus (Terence), 46
Euripides, 25
Every Man In His Humour (Jonson), 78, 79, 88
evolution by natural selection, 149–50, 153–54
exclusive laughter, 118, 119
exploitation of mistakes: as foundation of successful orators, 56–57, 61–62; in *Henry 5,* 66

Farquhar, George: *The Beaux Stratagem,* 83–85, 88; *The Recruiting Officer,* 83
fear and tragedy, 95–96
federal historians, and *The Decline and Fall,* 109–16
Fielding, Henry: concern for safety of minorities of, 101–2; *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers,* 102–3; on historical purpose of comedy, 119; influence of, 108–9, 112, 113; *Joseph Andrews,* 96–97; *Tom Jones,* 97, 103–7, 108, 109, 112; *The True Patriot,* 99–101, 103
Finley, Moses, 19
forgetfulness: comic focus on, 76–77; Cowley and, 80; Gay and, 86–87; happiness equated with, 79
fraud, as ingredient for success, 62–63
freedom: belief in, and encroachment on liberties of others, 143–45; civic commitment to, in England, 143; democracy and, 8; as emerging organically from bodies, 26–27, 28; promotion of, and Denshawai Incident, 137–38; prosperity as killing, 103–4; raw, regulation of, 91, 103; of speech *(parrhesia),* 17, 18; wealth and, 17–18
free will, 150
Frogs (Aristophanes): cleverness in, 24; crisis in, 11; critique of, 2, 23–25; origins of, 20; parodying of myth in, 26; popular success of, 29; populism in, 23–24; pro-oligarchic bias in, 167n58
Fukuyama, Francis, 4

Garrison, William Lloyd, 90, 127, 130, 131
Gay, John, *The Beggar's Opera,* 85–88
gendered humour of Warren, 113–15
Gentillet, Innocent, *Contre-Machiavel,* 62
George, Lyttelton, 121
Gibbon, Edward: Fielding influence on, 108–9; *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* 91, 107–10; influence of, 110–11, 113; on *Tom Jones,* 106–7; Warren on, 112
Gordon, William, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America,* 110–11
Gorst, Eldon, 142–43
Gould, Gerald, 54
governance, eccentric approach to, 106–7, 115–16
government and happiness, 50–51
Greek New Comedy, 30–31
Greek tragedy, 26
Greenblatt, Stephen, 55

Hackett, James, 71–72
Hamilton, Alexander, 87
happiness: abnegative theory of, 75, 77–78, 82, 88, 157; ancient comedy and, 11, 12, 13; bodies and, 74–75; in Declaration of Independence, 73; *demokratia* and, 8–9; Epicurus and, 73, 74–75, 79, 157; Gay and, 85; government and, 50–51; il-Fār and, 139–40; indolent view of, 73–74; Jefferson and, 88–90; from letting go, 76–77; Roman New Comics and, 37; Shadwell and, 80–81; views of, in Middle Ages, 78; wealth and, 74, 88
Hazlitt, William, 54
Henriad trilogy (Shakespeare): crisis at center of, 54–55; democratic foundation of, 71–72; education in comedy in, 56–57; focus on outcomes in, 60–61; imitation in, 55–56, 57–59; mistakes as

Henriad trilogy (Shakespeare) (*continued*) opportunities in, 61–62; power dynamics of, 67–68, 71; reactions to viewing of, 67. See also *Henry 5; 1 Henry 4*
Henry 5 (Shakespeare): focus on outcomes in, 65; Henry as force for democracy in, 63–72; interpretations of, 53–54, 72; mistakes as opportunities in, 66; pluralism in, 65–66; speech at Agincourt, 68, 69; *virtù* in, 54, 62–63; Washington and, 70. See also *Henriad* trilogy
Herodotus, 18
heterodox opinions, 98, 107
Hill, Aaron, 69, 175n4
historical narrative, introduction of comedy into, 113–14
History of the American Revolution, The (Ramsay), 111–12, 114, 115
History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, The (Gibbon), 91, 107–10
History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America, The (Gordon), 110–11
History of The Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution (Warren), 112–16
humor, use of term, 179n50. *See also* inclusive laughter; laughter
humour: in *The Decline and Fall,* 108; in *Don Quixote,* 93–95; *ethos* and, 104–5; of Gordon, 111; in *History of The Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution,* 113–15; in *Joseph Andrews,* 97; mercantile, 100–101; in *Political Arithmetic,* 99; use of term, 179n50
Hunter, Robert M. T., 134
"hyperbolic discounting," 149–51, 162n38

idealism: comic *demokratia* and, 145–46; democratic, 180n73; Shaw and, 148–49, 151, 153, 154; shortcomings of, 143–45
il-Fār, Aḥmad, *Riwāyat Ibn il-Balad,* 137, 138–43, 145–46, 151
Iliad, 118, 119
imitatio (imitation): adaptive learning and, 157; Bingham and, 121; comic, logic of, 57; comic practices of, 65–67; counterintuitive political effects of, 70–71; as democratic practice, 67–68; fortunate accidents and, 56; future for, 158; in *Henriad* trilogy, 57–59, 63–72; as imperfect practice, 64–65; iteration as starting point for, 56; of king, 71–72; in Middle Ages, 178n33; mistakes as opportunities and, 61–62; of outcomes or effects, 59–61; overview of, 13, 146; populism and, 116; reserved admiration and, 64; as rhetorical practice, 54, 55–56; of Shakespeare, by schoolboys, 68–69; Shakespeare and, 62–63; for training heads of state, 55–56, 59
imperialism: of Athens, 17–18, 149; belief in freedom and, 143–45; of England, 142–44, 149; idealism and, 143; liberal-electoral model and, 137; of past two hundred years, 138; Shaw and, 146–49, 151–52
impetuoso: in colonies, 51–52; il-Fār and, 139; in *La Mandragola,* 38–42, 45; Machiavelli and, 35; overview of, 13; Paine and, 50; populism and, 116; practical benefits of, 157; in *The Prince,* 46, 47
impotenzia, 35–36
inclusive laughter: adaptation to change and, 157; Bingham and, 120, 121–22; Douglass and, 131, 132–33; il-Fār and, 140–41; Irving and, 127–28; Lincoln and, 134–35; Shaw and, 147; techniques of, 118; Tyler and, 119
indolentia (indolence): in colonies, 84–85; democratic implications of, 81–82; Epicurus and, 73; Farquhar and, 83–84; feminist consequence of, 83; Gay and, 86–87; happiness and, 73–74; il-Fār and, 139–40; Jefferson and, 75, 88–90; Jonson and, 78–79; overview of, 13; populism and, 116; social implications of, 79–81
Institutes (Quintilian), 29
Ionian War trilogy (Aristophanes), 20, 26–28, 29
Iraq: civil war in, 4; US invasion of, 144
Irving, Washington: biography of George Washington, 127–29; *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon,* 123–25
Islamist Watani party, 141, 142
isonomia (legal equality), 17, 18
iteration and *imitatio,* 56

Jefferson, Joseph, 131–32
Jefferson, Thomas: *The Beggar's Opera* and, 87–88; Declaration of Independence and, 73, 88, 89–90; *The Decline and Fall* and, 91; education of, 1; on Epicurus, 74; on government, 17; indolence and, 75, 88–90; Machiavelli and, 49; Warren's *History* and, 115

John Bull's Other Island (Shaw), 137, 146–49, 151–53
Johnson, Samuel, 68, 69, 106
Jonson, Ben, 78–79
Joseph Andrews (Fielding), 96–97
Julius the Second, 46

Kant, Immanuel, 5
Kitchener, Herbert, 143
Kleophon, persecution of, 167n58

La Cassaria (Ariosto), 41, 43
La Mandragola (Machiavelli), 35–38, 41–45, 47, 51
Lamb, Charles, 68
laughter: varieties of, 118–19; as vehicle of social reform, 123. *See also* inclusive laughter
legal equality *(isonomia),* 17, 18
A Letter Concerning Toleration (Locke), 82
liberal-electoral model of democracy promotion: alternatives to, 5–7; basis of, 138; cultural imperialism and, 137; overview of, 4
liberalism: founding authors of, 5; Victorian, 144
liberty, regulation of, 155–56
Lincoln, Abraham, 71, 72, 133–35
literature, scientific study of, 156–57
Livy, 39
Locke, John: *A Letter Concerning Toleration,* 82; liberalism and, 5; property and, 88
Lucretius: forgetfulness and, 80; Gay and, 85; *The Nature of Things,* 75; on possession, 82; on rustic music, 86
Lutfī al-Sayyid, Ahmed, 141–42
Lyly, John, 63
Lysistrata (Aristophanes): crisis in, 11; critique of, 2, 20–22; origins of, 20; pluralism in, 21, 22; women in, 37

Machiavelli, Niccolò: ancient comedy and, 32; on careful men, 30; *Clizia,* 35; *Discorsi,* 35, 47; education of, 1; on empiricism of *demokratia,* 8–9; on imitation, 56; influence of comedy on, 34–35; innovators and, 105, 106; *La Mandragola,* 35–38, 41–45, 47, 51; lessons of Rome and, 103; life of, 34; as political theorist, 48; on Severus, 63; as translator, 40; *virtù* and, 62. See also *Prince, The*
Marlowe, Christopher, 62
Marshall, John, 125–26, 127, 128
Mason, George, 73
materialism: of Epicurus, 74–75, 81–82; in Machiavelli, 37; political causation and, 48–49
materiality of *demokratia,* 16, 17
Menander: *The Arbitrants,* 185n73; *Dyskolos,* 30–31, 32; Epicurus and, 76; narrative structure of, 76–77; *The Necklace,* 76; *Perikeiromene,* 37, 76, 169n86; on property, 88
Middleton, Conyers, 102–3, 104, 113
militarism and colonialism, 147–48
Miller, Samuel, 122
Milton, John, 1, 49
minorities: civic liberty as valuing, 107; democracy as conservation of, x; government inclusion of, 157; Petty on, 98; promotion of perspectives of, 106; protection of, 91, 101–2
mistakes, treating as opportunities, 56–57, 61–62, 66
mob rule, 91, 101–2, 103, 109, 155
Montesquieu, 1, 49
morality, Fielding view of, 102–3, 104–5
Much Ado About Nothing (Shakespeare), 82
music in *The Beggar's Opera,* 86, 87

narrative, as manufacturing history, 112
narrative of comic democracy, 133
narrative style, ix
natural selection, evolution by, 149–50, 153–54
Nature of Things, The (Lucretius), 75
Necklace, The (Menander), 76
New Comedy: Greek, 30–31; il-Fār and, 138, 140; narrative structure of Old Comedy and, 76–77; property rejection in, 74; Roman, 31–33, 37, 39, 41
New Comics, 30–33. *See also* Menander; Plautus; Terence
"new democrats," 5–8, 137

Ober, Josiah, 9, 12, 19
Observations on the New Constitution (Warren), 113
Old Comedy. *See* ancient comedy
oligarchy, participation rate in, 166n30
1 Henry 4 (Shakespeare), 67, 71–72. See also *Henriad* trilogy
oracles, 26
outcomes, focus on: as foundation of successful orators, 56, 59–61; in *Henry 5,* 65

Paine, Thomas, 49–52, 89, 91
parrhesia (freedom of speech), 17, 18
Pedro de Urdemalas (Cervantes), 92
Pepys, Samuel, 79
Perikeiromene (Menander), 37, 76, 169n86
Petty, William, *Political Arithmetic,* 97–99, 100
Phormio (Terence), 77
piety, flexible, in Athens, 25–26
Pitt, William, 122–23, 129
pity and tragedy, 95–96
Plato: on bodily logic of democracy, 25, 150; on *demokratia,* 8, 9, 19, 20; *imitatio* and, 71; *Republic,* 16–17, 29; on theater, 53; utopia and, 145
Plautus: *Aulularia,* 76; *Captivi,* 39; happiness and, 37; *impetuoso* and, 35; influence of, 32–33, 197n5; problems in plays of, 77
pluralism: ancient comedy and, 16; democracy and, 3, 146; of *demokratia,* 10, 12; in *Don Quixote,* 93; in *Dyskolos,* 31; empiricism and, 7; Fielding and, 96–97; as foundation of successful orators, 56–59; in *Henry 5,* 65–66; Irving and, 125; in *Lysistrata,* 21, 22; Machiavelli and, 35–36; new democrats and, 6; pragmatism and, 6; problem solving and, 14, 16, 29, 30, 33; in Roman New Comedy, 32; in *Thesmophoriazusae,* 22–23. *See also* diversity; populism
Political Arithmetic (Petty), 97–99, 100
political causation, materialist view of, 48–49
populism: of ancient comedy, 3, 11–12, 15, 26–27; comic practices and, 116; daring as leading to, 47–48; in *Frogs,* 23–24; Gibbon and, 191n76; impetuous, 38–41; in *Riwāyat Ibn il-Balad,* 141–42; utopian forms of, 72. *See also* pluralism
post-WWII interpretation of *Henry V,* 53
power dynamics: of *demokratia,* 18–19; of *Henriad* trilogy, 54–55, 67–68, 71; of *La Mandragola,* 35–38
pragmatism: of comedy, 13; democracy and, 136, 138; of *demokratia,* 3, 9–10, 19, 24; empiricism and, 7; of Epicurus, 75; as lesser ill, 40, 48; new democrats and, 6–7; pluralism and, 6; of *The Prince,* 49; as problem solving, 6, 9, 150, 161n22
Prince, The (Machiavelli): dedication to, 34; on *impetuoso,* 38, 45–49; influence of, 49–51; on lesser ill, 40; Paine and, 50–51; pluralism of, 35; pragmatism of, 49; on success, 63; on ways to fight, 57
problems. *See* crisis
problem solving: ancient comedy and, 11; *demokratia* and, 9, 10, 27, 89, 133, 137; empiricism and, 7; idealism and, 154; minorities and, 157; in New Comedies, 32, 77; pluralism and, 14, 16, 29, 30, 33; pragmatism as, 6, 9, 150
progressive democracy, 97
promotion of democracy. *See* democracy promotion; liberal-electoral model of democracy promotion
property: Adams on, 88–89; Charleton on, 79; Declaration of Independence and, 89–90; Epicurus and, 75, 76; Jefferson and, 73, 74; Jonson and, 78; Locke on, 82; New Comedies on, 88; Shadwell on, 81, 82–83
prosperity, freedom-killing effects of, 103–4
Pseudolus, 39–40, 43

Quintilian: on *imitatio,* 56, 59; on imperfections of great authors, 64; *Institutes,* 29; view of comedy of, 67
Quixotic governance, 13. See also *Don Quixote;* eccentricity

Ramsay, David, *The History of the American Revolution,* 111–12, 114, 115
Rawls, John, 5
reactiveness and *demokratia,* 16, 17
Recruiting Officer, The (Farquhar), 83
Republic (Plato), 16–17, 29
rhetoric: comic practices and, 56–62; early modern tradition of, 54; *imitatio* practice, 55–56; Shakespeare and, 62–63
rhetoricians, ancient, 28–29
Richard III (Shakespeare), 53, 63
"Rip Van Winkle" (Irving), 124–25
Riwāyat Ibn il-Balad (il-Fār), 137, 138–43, 145–46, 151
Robortello, Francesco, 56
Roman New Comedy, 31–33, 37, 39, 41
Roman Republic, 32, 47, 103, 107–10
Runciman, David, 9

Samia (Menander), 76–77
Sanu, Yaqub, 138
Schlegel, A. W., 72
Schlegel, Frederick, 72
scientific study of literature, 156–57

Second Continental Congress, 49, 51–52, 88
self-proclaimed democracy, 4–5
self-rule and *imitatio,* 70–71
sensible, democracy as, 155
Severus, 63
Shadwell, Thomas: happiness, property, and, 82–83; *The Sullen Lovers,* 80; *The Virtuoso,* 80–81
Shakespeare, William: Bell prompt book and, 69–70; *The Comedy of Errors,* 63; Irving on, 124; *Much Ado About Nothing,* 82; *Richard III,* 53, 63; schoolboy imitation of, 68–69; *virtù* and, 62–64; Washington and, 70. See also *Henriad* trilogy; *Henry 5*
Shaw, George Bernard, *John Bull's Other Island,* 137, 146–49, 151–53
Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, The (Irving), 123–25
slavery: Bingham on, 122; biographies of Washington and, 125–26; Constitution and, 126–27; Douglass on, 130–31; *Dred Scott* decision and, 117; Irving on, 128–29; Lincoln and, 134–35
slaves: boldness of, 39–41; as dispossessing masters, 42–44; emancipation of, 89–90. *See also* slavery
social learning, 201n7
Socrates, 25
Sparks, Jared, 126, 127, 128
specula principum, 55
state religion: in Athens, 25; comedy as, 109; of Roman Republic, 103, 104, 109
stereotypes in ancient comedy, 2
Strachey, Lytton, 158
success, worldly, logic of, 85–86
Sullen Lovers, The (Shadwell), 80

Terence: *Andria,* 40–41; *Eunuchus,* 46; happiness and, 37; *impetuoso* and, 35; influence of, 32–33; *Phormio,* 77; problems in plays of, 77
theater: in Athens, 25–26; Bingham on, 120; de Vega on, 187n23; in Egypt, 197n5; Plato on, 53
Themistocles, 10, 26
Thesmophoriazusae (Aristophanes), 20, 22–23
Third Wave democracy, 4
Thirty Tyrants, 15, 166n30
Tom Jones (Fielding), 97, 103–7, 108, 109, 112
trade, mob rule encouraged by, 101–2
tragedy: Greek, 26; rhetorical effects of, 95–96
True Patriot, The (Fielding), 99–101, 103
2 Henry 4 (Shakespeare). See *Henriad* trilogy
Tyler, Royall, *The Contrast,* 118, 119

universalizing approach to democracy, 3, 5
usurping dynamic of imitation, 60–61
utopianism: of democracy, 143, 153; imperialism and, 138; Shaw and, 149, 152

Virgil, 39
virtù: in *Henry 5,* 54, 62–64; imitation of, 67–71; in *La Cassaria,* 41; sovereignty and, 68
virtue, abnegative approaches to, 150
Virtuoso, The (Shadwell), 80–81
virtus, 56
Vives, Juan Luis, 59

Warren, Mercy Otis: *History of The Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution,* 14, 112–16; *Observations on the New Constitution,* 113
Washington, George, 51, 70, 89, 125–26, 127–29
Way of the World, The (Congreve), 83
wealth: distribution of, in US, 89; Epicurus and, 77; fame and, 94; freedom and, 17–18; happiness and, 74, 88; tyranny and, 103–4, 109, 112
Wealth (Aristophanes), 29
Whigs in England, 81–82
"Wine" (Gay), 85
women: in *Ecclesiazusae,* 29; in Egypt, 142; in *La Mandragola,* 36–37, 38; in *Lysistrata,* 20–22, 37; Shadwell and, 82–83

Yorktown, battle of, 114–15